



A MOMENT FOR ME: A SELF-COMPASSION BREAK FOR TEENS

"Self-compassion is simply giving the same kindness to ourselves that we would give to others."

—Christopher Germer

OVERVIEW

A quick self-compassion practice that can be applied throughout the day whenever difficult emotions arise.

PLANNING FOR IT

WHEN YOU MIGHT USE THIS PRACTICE

- Any time during the year
- When your students are feeling stressed and overwhelmed
- During an advisory period

TIME REQUIRED

- 10-15 minutes

LEVEL

- Middle School
- High School

MATERIALS

- A quiet place to practice

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Students will:

- Practice comforting and soothing themselves when they experience stress

ADDITIONAL SUPPORTS

- [Making Practices Culturally Responsive](#)
- [Adapting Practices for Students with Special Needs](#)
- [Making a Practice Trauma-Informed](#)
- [Making Classrooms and Schools Trauma-Informed and Healing-Centered](#)

SEL COMPETENCIES

- Self-Awareness
- Self-Management

HOW TO DO IT

REFLECTION BEFORE THE PRACTICE

- Take a moment to try this practice for yourself using a personal or professional challenge you're facing right now. Choose something mildly or moderately challenging, rather than an overwhelming one. Did this practice alter the way you feel about the challenge or about yourself?
- How do you think [self-compassion](#) is relevant to your students' lives, both in and out of school? Would they agree?
- Does this practice privilege your values over theirs in any way? For example, do you believe that being kind to yourself is more motivating than being hard on yourself, whereas students and parents do not?
- If your beliefs differ, is it possible to honor these differences in a way where none are viewed from a deficit lens?

INSTRUCTIONS

GETTING STARTED

- Before beginning this activity, take a few deep breaths.
- Settle into a quiet mental space for reflection.
- Remind students that they are encouraged but not required to participate. (They are welcome to sit quietly if they choose not to participate.)
- Tell students:
 - *We will purposely generate a little tension or stress in our minds and bodies by thinking of a challenging situation, so we can then learn how to use self-compassion.*
- Play the [audio recording](#) for your students, or lead them through the practice with the transcript below.

THE PRACTICE

- *Think of a situation in your life that is difficult or causing you stress. Please choose a situation that is not the worst or most difficult in your life, but that something that is causing you some discomfort.*
- *When you think of this situation, can you feel the experience in your body, perhaps discomfort such as tightness in the chest, gripping in the stomach?*
- *Now, say to yourself: "In this moment, a part of me is struggling."*
 - *This is mindfulness.*
 - *You might choose to say, "Whoa, this feels awful," or "this sucks," or maybe, "this is stress."*
- *Now say to yourself: "This kind of struggle is a part of life."*
 - *This is common humanity. Lots of other people struggle in this same way.*
 - *You might choose to say, "Other kids feel this way too," or "I'm not alone with this feeling," or "This is a part of being a teen and so many others kids struggle just like me." Or "All teens feel this at some time or another ...!"*
- *Now, offer yourself a kind and soothing, supportive touch – maybe a hand on your heart, or another gesture that feels right for you. Feel the warmth of your hand coming through to your body.*
- *Now, saying to yourself: "May I be kind to myself." Remembering that as teens, you're going through so many transitions – your brains are changing, your bodies are changing, you may be in a new school or thinking about college, so many pressures and so many changes. So be gentle with yourself.*
- *For more personal language, ask "what do I need to hear right now?" Or if you have trouble finding what words to say, ask yourself "What would I say to a good friend who was going through this? Can I say those words to myself?"*
 - *May I give myself the compassion that I need.*
 - *May I accept myself as I am.*
 - *May I learn to accept myself as I am.*
 - *May I forgive myself.*
 - *May I be strong.*
 - *May I be safe.*
 - *May I be peaceful.*
 - *May I know that I deserve love.*
- *And if the "May I" feels strange to you or like you are asking permission, you can always leave that out and just say "I wish to accept myself just as I am," or "Strong," or "Accept myself"*
- *Simply notice what you're feeling.*

CLOSURE

- *Ask students one or more of the following questions:*
 - *What does it feel like to comfort yourself in this way? What is it like to think that you can actually begin to notice when you're struggling and begin to offer yourself kind words?*
 - *Did anything change when you put your hand on your heart?*
 - *What is it like to know that you can actually treat yourself with more kindness?*
 - *Can you think of a situation where this would be useful to you?*
 - *Consider the three components of self-compassion—which were most meaningful to you and important to acknowledge?*
 - *Mindfulness ("This is a moment of suffering.")*
 - *Common humanity ("I am not alone in my suffering.")*

- *Self-Kindness (physical touch or soothing voice; "May I be kind to myself.")*

REFLECTION AFTER THE PRACTICE

- What worked or didn't work for you in leading this practice? How did the students respond to the practice? Would you change anything for next time?
- Do you notice whether students are responding to mistakes or failure or other challenges in life with a different attitude after engaging in this practice?
- What adjustments were made to the practice based on student and family input? How did it go? (We encourage you to share your experience with other users in the comments section.)
- Did students discuss how this practice might relate to or be helpful or unhelpful in their lives?

THE RESEARCH BEHIND THE PRACTICE

EVIDENCE THAT IT WORKS

Students who participated in a [pilot study](#) of a Mindful Self-Compassion (MSC) [program](#) for teens reported decreases in depression, stress, and negative feelings after completing a six-session course. Students in a second [study](#) of this program also reported greater resilience, gratitude, and a willingness to take on new challenges.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

As their cognitive capabilities grow in early adolescence, teens become more self-aware and, ultimately, more self-conscious. This can breed harsh self-criticism, so the need for self-compassion among teens is crucial.

When teens face challenges and beat themselves up about them, they can end up feeling even more stressed and isolated. Studies indicate that self-compassion practices may be more effective in addressing [depressed mood](#) than strategies like acceptance and reappraisal (shifting your thinking about a negative event).

SOURCE

[Making Friends with Yourself](#), Karen Bluth, Ph.D.