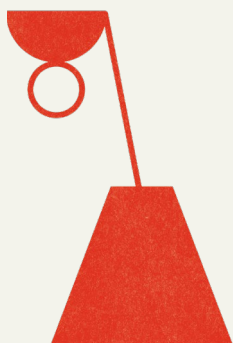




Self-Compassion

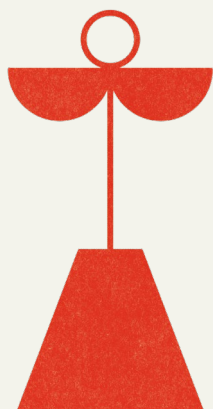
Fierce Self-Compassion Break: Cultivate the clarity and courage to protect yourself from harm.

Time Required: 5 minutes



Why you should try it

When we are hurt or suffering, it can help to soothe ourselves with warmth and acceptance. But in many situations, we also need to protect ourselves: to speak up, say no, draw boundaries, or fight injustice. Research suggests that more self-compassionate people are more empowered and resilient. They tend to take more action⁴⁵ to solve their problems, and cope better with stigma,⁴⁶ microaggressions,⁴⁷ and bullying.⁴⁸



Why it works

The three parts of fierce self-compassion each serve a purpose. Mindfulness counteracts discomfort and allows us to acknowledge what's going on. Recognizing our common humanity creates a sense of empowerment. Self-kindness gives us the determination and energy to protect ourselves and others. Together, this fosters brave, empowered clarity about our situation and response.

How to do it ⁴⁹

1

Think of a situation in your life in which you feel the need to establish boundaries, safeguard yourself, or assert yourself against someone. Opt for a situation where you feel mildly to moderately threatened, ensuring you're not in real danger, allowing yourself to learn the new skill without feeling overwhelmed. When you're ready, call up the situation in your mind's eye. Try not to focus too much on any particular person or group of people causing the situation. Rather focus on the harm itself. What's happening? What is the boundary violation or injustice? Try to allow yourself to feel whatever emotions come up: fear, anger, frustration? See if you can tune in to the physical discomfort this situation gives you. Now sit or stand up tall and roll your shoulders back, so that your posture embodies strength and determination. Then say a series of phrases (aloud or silently to yourself) designed to invoke the three components of self-compassion—mindfulness, common humanity, and self-kindness—in terms that feel active and protective. Below are some suggestions, but the goal is to find language that works for you personally.

- a. The first phrase is meant to help you be mindful of what is happening. Say to yourself slowly and with conviction, "I clearly see the truth of what's happening." That's mindfulness; we see things as they are. Find the words that seem right for you.
- b. The second phrase helps you remember your common humanity with others so you can draw strength from your connections while protecting yourself. Try saying, "I am not alone; other people have experienced this, as well," or "By standing up for myself, I stand up for everyone."

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- c.** Now, put a fist over your heart as a gesture of strength and bravery. Commit to being kind to yourself by keeping yourself safe. For the third phrase, assert confidently, “I will protect myself.”
 - d.** Finally, put your other hand over your fist and hold it tenderly. The invitation is to combine the fierce energy of brave, empowered clarity with the tender energy of a loving, connected presence. Give yourself full permission to feel the force of your anger and resolve, but also let this force be caring.

2

After this practice, you may be experiencing a lot of emotions. If calling on fierce self-compassion feels awkward or scary, allow yourself to go as slowly as you need to. The important thing is to set your intention to care for yourself as best you can.