



MINDFUL SELF-COMPASSION FOR ADULTS

“Anytime we can listen to true self and give the care it requires, we do it not only for ourselves, but for the many others whose lives we touch.”

-Parker Palmer

OVERVIEW

A mindfulness practice to help you experience the self-compassion that naturally exists within you, and consider the simple ways that you care for yourself each day.

LEVELS

- College
- Adult

PLANNING FOR IT

WHEN YOU MIGHT USE THIS PRACTICE

- Any time during the year
- At least once per week as an initial goal
- Before class begins, during prep time, during lunch, at the end of a work day
- When you are feeling stressed and overwhelmed
- Before you attend a staff meeting

TIME REQUIRED

- 7 minutes

MATERIALS:

- A quiet place to practice

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

You will:

- Practice mindful breathing
- Recognize your capacity for self-compassion
- Recall the simple ways you extend compassion to yourself

ADDITIONAL SUPPORTS

- [Making Classrooms and Schools Trauma-Informed and Healing-Centered](#)

SEL COMPETENCIES

- Self-Awareness
- Self-Management

HOW TO DO IT

REFLECTION BEFORE THE PRACTICE

- What sorts of challenges are you facing right now, either personally or professionally? How do you typically speak to yourself when you are under stress?
- How do you tend to comfort and soothe yourself?
- If you are sharing this practice with a group, consider how the participants might respond. How can you prepare yourself to model and experience a calm, self-accepting presence?

INSTRUCTIONS

GETTING STARTED

- Find a quiet place where you can sit, stand, or lie down, whichever is most comfortable.
- Close your eyes (or keep them open), whichever you prefer.
- Play the following audio recording:

MP3 Link: <https://soundcloud.com/user-877205336-555180076/meditation-for-self-compassion>

THE PRACTICE

This meditation is a self-compassion meditation of revealing loving presence.

You can do this practice sitting, lying down, or even standing.

We'll begin by simply settling into the breath and the body.

As you inhale, notice sensations of breath throughout the entire body, and as you exhale, relax and release that attention.

Inhale, noticing sensations in the body.

Exhale, relaxing and releasing.

Continue this pattern of noticing through the inhale, and relaxing through the exhale, on the rhythm of your own breath.

When the mind slips away—caught up by some idea, memory, or image—no problem at all.

Simply relax; release whatever has captured your attention, and return—for just a bit longer—to settling into the breath and the body.

Noticing through the inhale, relaxing and releasing through the exhale.

[PAUSE]

We'll now shift and focus our attention away from the breath and the body and into our practice of self-compassion.
In this practice, we're going to focus on the subtlety of compassion for ourselves—that's already here.

We begin this by simply noticing right now, right here.
Is there a sense of care, kindness, and compassion for ourselves?
The very basic human condition is one in which we are seeking to be okay.

Noticing this basic human desire to care for ourselves, see if you can feel that as a presence.
Noticing whether in the body this sense of caring or kindness can be experienced just through the simple breath.
Inhale, noticing a caring presence.
Exhale, noticing a caring presence.

This may feel hard or abstract. You can reflect on the simple ways that you take care of yourself...

Listening to this meditation.
Taking care of your body through bathing, feeding.
Think of the simple ways that you try to avoid difficulty and discomfort.
For example, shifting or moving the body if you're uncomfortable.
Putting on a warm sweater if you're cold.
Just notice these simple ways we're already kind to ourselves—caring about our well-being.

Instead of having to generate or construct self-compassion, feel or imagine simply revealing the self-compassion which is already here—our desire to alleviate our own suffering.

Continuing again through the inhale and exhale—
Inhale, considering this loving presence that's already here.
And exhaling extending a wish of compassion to our self.
Inhale, noticing the loving presence already here.
And exhale, extending that loving presence and compassion to ourselves.

[BRIEF PAUSE]

This may feel hard or hokey at first—no problem at all.
Setting our mind and intention towards this caring way of being can create a natural form of relaxation and resilience, so keep steadying the mind here.
Noticing a caring loving presence, extending a caring loving presence—for ourselves.

[PAUSE]

Consider continuing this feeling of loving presence throughout the rest of our day and evening.
No need to shift anything, simply bringing this practice to a close.

SOURCE

Eve Ekman, PhD

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REFLECTION AFTER THE PRACTICE

- What does it feel like to soothe yourself in this way? Do you notice any resistance in your body or mind as you engage in this activity?

THE RESEARCH BEHIND IT

EVIDENCE THAT IT WORKS

Participants in an eight-week Mindful Self-Compassion (MSC) [program](#) reported feeling greater self-compassion, mindfulness, and life satisfaction at the end of the program when compared to a control group.

Studies indicate that self-compassion practices are a form of [self-care](#) that may reduce [burnout](#) in adults who work in service-oriented professions like teaching. A [review](#) of 22 self-compassion related therapies indicates that self-compassion approaches can reduce both anxiety and depression. In fact, self-compassion strategies may even be more effective in addressing [depressed mood](#) than strategies like [cognitive reappraisal](#) (shifting your thinking about a negative event) and acceptance.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

When we face challenges with students or colleagues, and we beat ourselves up about them as a result, we can end up feeling even more stressed and isolated. A healthier response is to treat ourselves with kindness and understanding. In fact, teachers who are more mindful and self-compassionate foster more [emotionally supportive](#) relationships with students in their classrooms.

And for those using the practice in higher education, self-compassionate [college students](#) are more likely to ask questions, seek help, and participate in the classroom activities.

TERMS OF USE

Thank you for downloading this resource! Please feel free to share it with friends, teachers, colleagues, and anyone else who might benefit from it.

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Please email us at ggsceducation@berkeley.edu with any questions about our programs and resources for educators.

With gratitude,
Greater Good in Education