

Self-Compassion Break Script from Bob Gillespie

This practice is the Self-Compassion Break, which comes from the Mindful Self-Compassion curriculum developed by Kristin Neff and Chris Germer.

It's about a 5-minute practice when we first learn it, but the encouragement is then to begin practicing it briefly in your life, on the spot, whenever you need it. Self-compassion is responding to our own suffering in the caring way we would respond to a dear friend or a child who's struggling. This Self-Compassion Break is designed in 3 stages to directly experience the 3 components of self-compassion: 1) Mindfulness, 2) Common Humanity, and 3) Kindness. Each stage is about a minute. Let's try it out together.

Taking a few deep breaths and settling into your body.

Then bringing to mind a situation in your life that is causing you stress. When first learning this practice, choosing a problem that's in the mild to moderate range so that we gradually develop this quality of self-compassion.

Bringing this difficulty to life in your experience right now. Where do you feel it in the body? Noticing and feeling any discomfort in your body. Being present with the sensations as they arise in your body.

With the difficulty present, now try saying to yourself, slowly:

1. "This is a moment of struggle"

That's mindfulness, the first component of self-compassion. Recognizing the struggle while we're struggling, validating how we feel while we're experiencing it. We can also say to ourselves:

- This hurts.
- Ouch!
- This is stressful.
- Sensing what it's like for someone to experience this feeling and acknowledging that it's tough.

2. Now for the second stage of the Self-Compassion Break, try saying to yourself: "Struggle is a part of life"

That's common humanity, the second component of self-compassion. Other options include:

- I'm not alone.
- We all struggle in our lives.
- Many other people struggle like this, just like me.
- This is how it feels when a person struggles in this way. Sensing right through your feeling what others feel. Feel, through your feeling, what they feel. In this way, sensing this feeling as not just your own, but as your deep connection to

many other people. (from John Makransky's "Taking Our Own Layers of Suffering into Compassion for Others" meditation)

Now, for the third stage of the Self-Compassion Break, experimenting with offering yourself a simple gesture of soothing touch. One option is placing your hand over your heart, or trying another gesture of soothing touch of your choice somewhere on your body, feeling the warmth and gentle touch of your hands.

And try saying to yourself:

3. "May I be kind to myself," or "May I give myself what I need." That's kindness, the third component of self-compassion.

Some options are:

- May I accept myself as I am.
- Or "May I begin to accept myself as I am."
- May I forgive myself.
- May I be patient with myself.

Perhaps there are particular words of kindness and support that you need to hear in this difficult situation. Offering yourself what you need. What simple message might be a caring response?

Good work. You've practiced the Self-Compassion Break. Inviting you to continue experimenting with this practice and becoming familiar with it. So the next time you are struggling or stressed, you can pause for a moment or two on the spot and acknowledge what you are experiencing with the 3 stages of the Self-Compassion Break: First, acknowledging what you are experiencing with mindfulness—"Ouch-this hurts"; Second, moving from isolation to connection by reminding yourself, "I'm not alone in this struggle"; and finally saying to oneself something like: "May I be kind to myself." So that whenever you notice you're struggling, it becomes an opportunity to practice self-compassion. Good luck with your practice.

Addendum: For a longer practice in Step 3: "If you're having difficulty finding the right words, imagine that a dear friend or loved one is having the same problem as you. What would you say to this person? What simple message would you like to deliver to your friend, heart to heart? Now see if you can offer the same message to yourself.