

Write A Compassionate Letter To Yourself

1. Write down something about yourself that you don't like, that you tend to struggle with, and about which you judge yourself harshly. This might be a type of behaviour you do, or a 'bad habit', or a way in which you mistreat yourself or others, etc.
2. Write down what difficult thoughts and feelings show up when you think about the above. (E.g. Sadness? Shame? Anxiety? Guilt? Anger? Insecurity? Painful memories? Difficult urges, impulses or sensations in your body? Versions of the 'I'm Not Good Enough' story?)
3. Now take a couple of minutes to consider this question:
If someone you deeply care about were suffering in the same way you are — struggling with the same sorts of things as you are, and judging themselves harshly, and experiencing very similar painful thoughts and feelings to yours — how would you treat them? If you wanted to send them the message, 'I see you're hurting, I care about you and I'm here for you,' what sort of things would you say?
4. Now write yourself a compassionate letter: acknowledging your pain and responding with kindness. The idea is to say the same kinds of things to yourself as you would to someone else you really care about if they were struggling with something similar.
5. Include a reminder to yourself that we are all flawed, fallible, imperfect human beings. We all make mistakes. We all screw up. We all have bad habits. We all do things we regret. We all have difficult thoughts and feelings. We all struggle. So this is something you have in common with all human beings.
6. Mention how your past has played a role in this: your childhood, your family, your culture, your genes, your human biology, things you have inherited from your ancient ancestors, difficult times you've been through, difficult events you've experienced.
7. Remember that at some level, your body and your mind and your thoughts and your feelings, are always trying to help you: either to help you get something you want or avoid something you don't want. How has this aspect of you been helpful in the past? What has it helped you to get or avoid? What does it remind you is important to you?
8. Write something understanding that acknowledges your pain and offers some encouragement. For example: *'This is really difficult ... and I can handle it'* or *'This is hard; be kind to yourself.'*
9. With great kindness and understanding, acknowledging how hard life is for you right now, consider if there are any small things you can say and do to respond better to this aspect of yourself? (This can include using skills such as dropping anchor, unhooking, and making room).
10. Once you've finished, put the letter away for a while. It's often good to revisit it on future occasions where your mind is beating you up and you're getting really hooked by harsh-self-judgment. (Many people find it helpful to write a few of these letters, for different aspects of themselves that they struggle with; so you may like to write more of them - e.g. a new one every week or two.)