

Audio Track 8: Putting Self-Compassion Into Practice with Mindfulness, Common Humanity and Kindness

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Try this: Putting self-compassion into practice, mindfulness, common humanity and kindness.

To begin, you might call to mind something you're in the midst of that's causing distress. Not the most stressful situation in your life. 3 to 4 on the scale of distress where ten is unbearable. And allow yourself to open fully to the situation.

As you consider the difficulty, notice where your mind goes. Do you tend to push the problem away or tamp it down? Or do you make it bigger, perhaps anticipating the other problems it may cause? Can you come back to just the reality of what is happening in this moment? And what is happening with your emotions? Can you feel the feeling, sadness, fear or whatever might be there? Are you pushing away the feeling? Or are you feeding it and making it more intense? See if you can find your way back to opening to the feeling just as it is. Perhaps you can even name the feeling.

And finally see what's happening in your body. Often we feel a problem somewhere in the body. Take a moment now and scan your body for where you feel it most easily. You might notice, for example, an achiness in the chest or a hollowness in the belly. Or perhaps it's tightness in the throat. Or a hot red face. As you do, take a moment to acknowledge what the body is holding. And if you can. Invite some softness into the area that's holding the tension. You might even

offer the kindness of a hand over the part of the body that's holding it. Can you allow it to be like this? Just for now? That's the mindfulness part.

And as we turn our attention toward the common humanity part, you might notice any thoughts of how things shouldn't be like this or how others are having a better experience while you're uniquely struggling. Or maybe you're having thoughts that others wouldn't understand. What emotions are you experiencing? Perhaps a sense of overwhelm, hopelessness, despair, fear. See what it is for you.

And now let's see what happens when you broaden your perspective just a little bit. Can you remember people who have struggled with similar issues? For example, maybe you felt like the only one who doesn't feel loved in their primary relationship. If so, what would it be like to remember others you have known who once felt the same way you do? What about people you don't know? Might there be others who share your experience or something similar? And what if you realized that those rosy pictures you see on social media actually cover up the pain that others are in but don't speak about? Perhaps you can recognize the way you also don't speak about the truth of the situation you're in.

What if you broaden your perspective out even further to include people who have problems right this moment? Include people, whether they're experiencing the same problem as yours or not. Can you see that having loss, failures and disappointments is part of life? Even if they aren't present for everyone at this moment, you're not alone. Even if it feels this way right now.

Struggle is part of every life. Sometimes it's hard to feel the truth that we're not alone. It may feel

too vulnerable to let yourself feel this right now, and you may feel resistance arise. That's okay too. Perhaps just opening your mind to the possibility that you're not alone is enough right now. If you can, you might imagine yourself surrounded by others who are also struggling right now. How do you imagine they might feel? Might they have the same or similar feelings as you do? Everyone you're visualizing right now actually shares the pain that you are in. You belong, you are understood, you are not alone. Together, you can hold the pain of this situation. That's the common humanity part.

Now let's turn to the kindness part. If you find you've relaxed and eased, you might need to recall and refresh the situation you've been working with, by opening to the pain of the situation, remembering you're not alone with it. Can you offer yourself some gesture of kindness? Perhaps placing a hand on the part of the body that's holding the distress as a way of offering warmth and support. Or if you like, you can invite that part of the body to soften a bit without requiring it to change, just softening around it, providing a soft place for the body to relax and release any tension that isn't currently serving you. You can stay here as long as you want. And are there any kind words you need to hear? Perhaps words that you would offer a dear friend who was struggling in the same way. "I'm here for you". Or, "You'll get through this" Or, "That's really rough and it isn't your fault".

You can try offering the same kind words to yourself right now. You may need to say them over and over and over. And only if it feels right to you, you might even try letting the words in, receiving your own kindness. You can stay here as long as you want. Before you finish this

exercise, you might just take a moment to notice any effects of this practice. How do you feel right now?

And please remember to thank yourself for showing up and practicing for opening to your own pain, and offering yourself kindness.

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