

Audio File Transcript

Behavioral Self-Compassion for Shame

This practice is called behavioral self-compassion for shame. When people think of practicing self-compassion, they usually think of mental practices like meditation, visualizations, or positive self-talk. However, many people don't have the time, the interest, or the capacity for mental training. So if that's true for you, don't worry because Behavioral practices are just as valuable as mental practices. Practicing small acts of self-compassion in daily life is also a great way to start self-compassion practice and it also keeps self-compassion practice safe. Behavioral self-compassion is especially helpful when working with shame. And that's because we don't feel shame all the time, but when we do, and we manage to treat ourselves in a compassionate way, we can see clearly that self-compassion works. Unfortunately, however, when we feel shame, the last thing we're inclined to do is to be kind to ourselves. We don't feel deserving of behaving in a nice way toward ourselves. It's also difficult to know what to do when we're engulfed in shame. So to increase the likelihood that you'll respond to shame with self-compassion. A helpful question to ask is, how do I care for myself already? So every one of us has many good self-care habits, or we wouldn't be alive today. So what are those habits? What do you like to do for yourself? And if we can remember those things in a moment of shame, we're more likely to do them.

So I'm going to list five different categories for you and invite you to write down for yourself how you care for yourself already, perhaps in each of these categories. So then if you feel a moment of shame, you can just look at what you've written and do one of those things. You don't even have to reflect upon it. So the first category is physical. How do you care for yourself physically, bodily? How do you care for your body? Maybe you like to eat a healthy meal, get some exercise, take a long shower or warm bath. Soothe your body with a cup of tea, or get a massage. What works for you already? Next category is mental. What do you do for your mind when your mind needs a little care? Maybe your mind is full of thoughts that are pulling you down. How do you lift up your mind? Do you read an uplifting book? Do you watch funny movies? Do you absorb yourself in maybe a hobby or some art? Simple behavioral things that might help you care for your mind. Then the next category is emotional. How do you care for yourself emotionally? If you're emotionally distraught in daily life, what do you do? Do you listen to music? Do you play with a pet? Do you maybe let yourself have a good cry? What do you do that works? And can you remember to do this for yourself when you experience the distress of shame? The 4th category is relational, interpersonal. How do

you care for yourself interpersonally when you need it? Maybe you're feeling lonely. Maybe you're under some kind of distress. How do you feel less alone? Maybe you meet with friends or connect online or go through holiday photos. Do some online gaming with friends. Maybe take a walk, chat with your neighbors. What seems to come easiest for you when you need to care for yourself relationally?

And the last category, and not least, is spiritual. So that we all have a dimension to our lives that is very subtle, perhaps even beyond all these ones I just mentioned. You might say the deepest thing. What stirs you at that level, say at a spiritual level? Maybe you like to walk in the woods. Maybe you like to Help others, do some service, maybe love to pray or sing. So again, we're interested in behavioral self-compassion actions which you can take in a moment of shame as an expression of self-kindness and self-compassion. What works for you? So hopefully you now have a list of activities that you enjoy, and you can keep them as a handy reminder when you need some self-compassion, some behavioral self-compassion. So that when you're stuck in shame, you can give yourself a gift, the gift of one of these activities. And again, this is a safe way to practice self-compassion, safer than mental practices or contemplative practices because behavioral self-compassion is so ordinary. What is not ordinary is remembering behavioral self-compassion. So hopefully this little practice has helped you on your way. Thank you.