

Audio File Transcript

Fierce Self-Compassion for Shame

This practice is called Fierce Self-Compassion for Shame. And it shows you how to evoke the energy and attitude of fierce self-compassion even in the midst of shame. So you've already practiced protecting self-compassion if you did the practice saying no to devaluing messages. And in this practice we'll reawaken that power of protection and then we're going to expand the practice to include providing for our needs and also encouraging ourselves to live the best life possible despite shame. You'll have a chance to experiment with various words and gestures. So the invitation is to be curious, even playful as you go along, looking for words and gestures that feel just right for you. And as always, we want to experience the positive energy of self-compassion more than the experience of shame. So remembering that you only need to touch shame in order to evoke self-compassion. Some people feel a bit uncomfortable when they practice fierce self-compassion, for good reason, either because being fierce had bad consequences in the past or might even now. And also fierce self-compassion can evoke vulnerable feelings such as sadness or grief or fear. Maybe memories of not being adequately protected in the past. Some people, especially women, have been socialized not to be fierce, so breaking a taboo like that can cause fear. But please know that when vulnerable feelings arise during fierce self-compassion practice as they often do, it's an opportunity to validate and to comfort ourselves with tender self-compassion, with gentle self-compassion. So tender self-compassion offers a secure base that we can return to when we practice fierce self-compassion.

So in this practice, please remember to move at your own pace. Remember that you can always lean back or you can let go. So what does leaning back mean? Perhaps taking a deep breath, offering yourself compassionate touch, and letting go could mean turning off the recording and going for a walk. And you can also always tone down the fierceness aspect of this practice if it feels too intense. And you can also just take it in small bite-sized chunks. So if you would like to do this practice, fierce self-compassion for shame, as usual, please find a comfortable position and take a few breaths, allowing yourself to settle into your body and into this moment. And then to have something to work with, please bring to mind a past relationship in which you felt mild to moderately shamed, judged, criticized, disrespected or devalued. And also let it be a relationship that is over and done. But when you think about it, still brings up a feeling of shame. And also please choose a relationship, again, that was only moderately shaming, so nothing traumatic, please. And when one comes to mind, let

yourself remember in an embodied way how that relationship felt to you as you visualize the person in your mind. And also maybe recall a shaming message that you received in that relationship or that you interpreted in a shaming way. And as you do this, also notice what's happening in your body. And if there's any shame, feeling it with a kind of compassionate awareness, like, oh yeah, shame. That's how I felt. So now let's begin to evoke a sense of fierce self-compassion.

So if you like, try sitting up a little taller in your chair. Perhaps holding your head high. Maybe rolling your shoulders up and back. Having a proud chest. And maybe to activate the energy and the strength of fear, self-compassion, you may even want to stand up. Standing up can make you feel stronger, ready for action. If you can stand up and you'd like to stand up, please do so. And in this position, feel your breathing, one breath after another. And as you inhale, start breathing in a word over and over that reminds you of inner strength as you breathe in, breathing in strong, strong, strong, or brave, brave, brave. Breathing in a word that evokes for you inner strength. So now with this energy or this attitude of fierce or tough or strong self-compassion, let's focus on the protecting aspect. You may already have words and gestures for the protecting aspect, the aspect that allows you to say no in just the right way. So please bring to mind the challenging person who stirs up shame in you and go ahead and remind yourself of words or gestures that bring forth the power of protection. What words make you feel strong and protected in relationship to this person? Even now. And again, don't worry if they're too strong for real life. What we'd like you to do is to feel safe and protected now. So maybe there's words like, stop it. No. Back off. I'm so tired of hearing this, or enough already. So find some words that make a safe boundary and say those words a few times to yourself. Say those words a few times to this other person in your mind's eye and notice how it makes you feel. Keep saying the words or find just the right words that make you feel strong. And is there a gesture that maybe you can add to it? Maybe an outstretched straight arm with a palm extended, flat hand. The expression of no. Maybe your forearms crossed in front of you. Or maybe just waving your hands in front of this person like no, or a protective fist near your chest like this isn't happening anymore. So try experimenting with a few gestures, perhaps combining them with your words to have a full experience of protective self-compassion. And as you do this, often some vulnerable feelings arise. So, as I mentioned earlier, please feel free to shift over to tender self-compassion. If you wish, you could just take a pause on the fierce side and put a compassionate hand over your heart or gently rub your cheek, you know, whatever feels just right, feel like, oh yeah, this was hard, this was hard. And then at some point maybe go back to strength.

So we're trying to find a nice balance, right, between tending to our vulnerable feelings and also taking a strong protective stance, safe boundary. So let's shift to the second form of fear of self-compassion. The first was protective. This is providing. providing self-compassion,

giving ourselves now some of what was probably missing in this relationship. So toward that end, please think of a wise, compassionate person who might have something helpful to say to you regarding this relationship. So it could be, for example, the compassionate friend from a previous exercise, or it could be your own inner compassion. Maybe there's an angle to this that you need to hear. So what compassionate, validating, reassuring words would still be helpful to hear to provide for you? So maybe you need to hear words like you are deserving. Maybe you didn't feel respected or loved enough and you needed to hear you are deserving. Or maybe you've had a lot of self-doubt in this relationship. Maybe you needed to hear or hear now trust yourself. Trust yourself. Or maybe your needs were disregarded and you need to hear your needs matter too. Your needs matter too. Or maybe you felt alone and you need to hear I'm here for you. So can you find some validating, reassuring words? Or maybe you needed something at the time and there's a word that just captures it. Maybe you just needed some kindness. Yes, kindness or respect. Yes, respect. Or maybe you needed just a little bit of loyalty. Yes, loyalty. If you like, if you have some good words that come for you, come up for you, can write them down even. It gives them a little more reality. And maybe you'd like to add a gesture to your words to enhance this spirit or attitude of providing for yourself, knowing that you deserve to be treated respectfully. So for example, one gesture for providing fierce self-compassion would be like spreading your arms wide and gathering up all you need with both arms and bringing your hands to your body, to your heart, sweeping your arms out and gathering up, gathering up over and over again. Or you can do it one hand after another, right hand, left hand, right hand, left hand, sweeping out and then toward your body as if giving yourself what you need. This is a way of reminding ourselves to give ourselves what we need, especially when we're not getting it in a relationship. Or perhaps placing your hands across your chest and then out with open, uplifted palms over and over again. In other words, providing for myself and then offering to others, providing to myself, offering to others. back and forth. So again, play around and see what feels just right for you, gesture-wise, to reinforce that it's okay to provide for ourselves, especially when relationships are not giving us what we need. And then the last aspect of fear of self-compassion is encouraging self-compassion.

So did you need any encouragement in this relationship? Maybe you were a little too reticent or hesitant. Or maybe even now when you think into this relationship, when you think of this person, maybe you still need a little encouragement. Maybe this memory is still holding you back. Is there some change in attitude that you'd like to have or even a change you'd still like to make related to what you experienced? Do you still need or want support to keep your distance? Or maybe you need encouragement to trust again. Maybe it left a kind of mark on you that keeps you from being more fully yourself. So, toward this end, please bring to mind again a wise and compassionate person, perhaps your compassionate friend who might

have some words to share with you. Or just tap into your inner compassion or imagine what a good compassionate friend would say to you. And are there any words of support that still would be good to hear? Words of encouragement like whatever it is you have in mind, you can do this. You can do this, or you can do this, or you can do this. Go for it. So finding language that captures this encouraging attitude to push through the barriers, push through the fears, because you know that this is good for you. And are there any gestures that might strengthen or motivate you? So for example, one gesture might be sweeping up your arms at your waist as if lifting somebody up, like both arms. Sweeping your arms up, like lifting somebody up. Or maybe extending a fist high up and forward, you know, like let's go. Vamos. Encouragement, making a move, maybe pumping 2 fists, like you can do this, you can do this, or we've got this, or maybe a thumbs up, you know, you can do this, you've got this. Are there any encouraging gestures that if your spirit is wavering, but you know this is good to do, we'll help you do it. So go ahead and experiment with words and gestures. If you like, you can also write down whatever works best for you so that you remember, and after you've done all of this, maybe you can just take a final moment to reflect on protecting, providing, and encouraging self-compassion. Is there an aspect of this that you may need the most in your life now? Do you need more protection? Do you need to provide for yourself? Do you need a little more encouragement in general? And is there any phrase or combination of phrases and gestures that if you were to just choose one that you could integrate into your life that you'd like to kind of bring forth more often than not. What would that be? Maybe even imagining a situation coming up where it would be really nice to feel this protection or providing or encouragement. Maybe not expressing it exactly in a particular way because each situation is different, but evoking the energy Fierce, strong, tough, resilient, self-compassion. Thank you.