

Audio File Transcript

Forgiving Our Bodies and Ourselves

This practice is called forgiving our bodies and ourselves. It is based on the five steps to self-forgiveness that you already learned. Those steps are mindfulness, self-compassion, wisdom, the intention to forgive, and the responsibility to protect and repair. So you already experienced the first two steps in the self-compassion break for body shame, namely mindfulness and self-compassion. And now you'll have a chance not only to re-experience those two parts, but also to explore the causes and conditions that lead to body shame. forming an intention to forgive anything that you'd like to forgive and then start to make a plan to protect yourself from further shame. Please remember that self-forgiveness has its own time. It can't be forced. So therefore, please bring some gentle curiosity to each part of this practice and also let go of any expectations that you may have to the best of your ability. Just see what happens. The practice takes about 20 minutes, and it would be helpful to take notes as you go along. And depending on what gets evoked during this exercise, please use your wisdom and take good care of yourself. If your cup is full right now, consider doing this practice at another time. So if you'd like to proceed, please find a comfortable seat, perhaps at a desk, so that you can do some writing. Maybe have a pen and paper nearby.

Allow yourself to settle into your chair, perhaps feeling how you are firmly supported by your chair. And maybe take a few breaths, nice relaxing breaths, and settle into this present moment. And to remind yourself of steps one and two of self-forgiveness, namely mindfulness and self-compassion, please start by bringing your attention to the same part of your body in the exercise self-compassion break for body shame, that evokes mild to moderate shame in you. And also allow yourself to experience the emotions that arise when you focus on that part of your body, including feeling ashamed. Thinking about that part of your body, experiencing emotions that arise, and also seeing if you can make room for whatever emotions come up in a spacious and accepting way. This is all part of the experience of shame. So that's mindfulness, generous, kind, open-hearted, spacious, accepting of awareness in the present moment. Being with our experience just as it is. And then stage two on the path to self-forgiveness, self-compassion. If it feels right to you, please begin to Offer yourself some compassionate touch to the part of your body that feels shame. Or you can put a soothing and supportive hand on another part of your body, maybe just to give your whole body a little kindness. And are there or were there in the last practice any compassionate words that you would like to say to yourself simply as a kind response to the stress of shame? If so, please say these words to yourself right now. And please remember

that we're giving ourselves compassion and we're bringing compassion to our bodies as a natural response to the discomfort of shame, not to fix how we feel. That's true compassion. True compassion is just being with things as they are, especially when they're difficult. Compassion for the experience of body dissatisfaction or body shame. Compassion for the discomfort you feel when you think about that particular part of your body. And then the next stage is wisdom. Seeing your body perhaps from a broader perspective. through the eyes of compassion and also seeing the conditions of your life that may lead to body shame. So, to begin to forgive your body, please notice if any of the following words are meaningful to you. Your body is doing the best it can based on everything that brought it into being. Your genes passed through generations, the conditions of your childhood, habits accumulated over a lifetime, social and cultural messages, and the stresses of everyday life. Your body is doing the best it can. Your body may not always work the way you wish, but it doesn't mean to make you suffer. Your body does not wish to do you any harm. Your body is just trying to help you meet your goals and aspirations. Even though perhaps your body may have caused you embarrassment or shame by how it looks, It never meant to do so. Your body just wants to support you on your way. Your body wants to be your friend. If any of these phrases, any of these thoughts are meaningful to you or resonate with you, please feel free to write them down. So those are reflections that may help you to forgive your body. And here are some additional reflections that may help you to forgive yourself, particularly in relationship to your body. For example, body shame and body dissatisfaction are part of the human experience. Most of us feel it. Most of us know what this is like. Most of us have an ambivalent relationship with one or more parts of our bodies. And our bodies do disappoint us. They inevitably become sick or age and they die. And it's so common that when something goes wrong with our bodies, we blame ourselves. This is entirely natural, but it hurts. It hurts to blame ourselves when something goes wrong. And when shame arises about your body, that's not a crime. It happens because you wish to be loved. The motivation behind shame is the wish to be loved. And you think perhaps that you would be less lovable because of your body. So of course you feel shame. And as children, our bodies were sources of wonder and amazement. Little children. They're astonished at what bodies can do.

So where did you get the idea that you are less lovable because of your body or due to a particular body part? Would you like to reflect on that for a minute? So regarding the particular part of your body that you are considering in this exercise, did you learn as a child that you are somehow less lovable because of this? And if so, where did you get that idea? Who gave you that idea? And is body shame or shame about this particular part of your body, part of your culture? In other words, does your culture particularly devalue your body or a particular part of your body? Or does your culture discriminate against illness or disability, as most cultures do? So reflecting, for example, that Shame is not your fault. We all come by

it honestly. We internalize what we hear, see, and experience. So if any insights have come to your mind through these reflections, this is a good time to write them down so you don't forget. And now we come to the fourth stage on the path to self-forgiveness, the intention to forgive. So remembering that it's not your fault that you feel shame about your body, but your relationship to your body is your responsibility.

So the next step is forming an intention to forgive. So maybe you need to forgive your body, or maybe you mostly want to forgive yourself in relationship to your body. So see if any of the following words speak to you, remembering that we're not trying to force forgive. We're just seeing if it feels right to forgive. So forgiveness phrases may be the following. May I begin to forgive my body for the pain that it may have caused me? Surely, without any wish to cause me harm or to make me suffer. May I begin to forgive my body for the pain that it caused me? Surely without any wish to cause me harm or make me suffer. Or maybe you would rather focus on Forgiving yourself. May I begin to forgive myself for any suffering I have caused to my body or myself through my behavior or my attitude without any wish to cause suffering. May I begin to forgive myself for any suffering I may have caused to my body or myself through my behavior or my attitude without any wish to cause suffering. So please, again, go ahead and write down any intention to forgive that might resonate with you, that is true for you. And then the last stage to self-forgiveness is the responsibility to protect and repair. And the purpose of this final step is to increase to the best of our ability the chance that we will not repeat the same attitudes or behaviors that caused distress either to ourselves or to our bodies. So for example, is there anything you'd like to know or do to help you be a better friend to your body? So for example, would you like to put less stress on your body? If so, would it help to remember that your body is doing the best it can? Would you like to give up an unhealthy habit? If so, do you need the help of others to do that, to maintain your resolve? Sometimes a community helps. Or would it help to continue to practice self-compassion? Maybe as self-compassion grows, also self-compassion in relationship to the body also grows. Would you just like to do that and see what happens? So the question is, there any action that you might like to take regarding your relationship with your body to become a better friend to your body. So if so, please write it down. And remember, no step is too small. Even a new thought can be a step in the right direction. And then when you're ready, you can begin to release this practice and allow the practice to settle, just resting in your own experience to the extent possible, letting your experience and yourself be just as you are. A lot of room, a lot of space to be just like this. And before you close this practice entirely, again, always helpful to take a moment to reflect on what you just experienced and also to write down anything that you'd like to remember. In other words, was there any aspect of this practice that you found particularly helpful? Maybe it was helpful to reflect on cultural messages that you received about your body or a specific incident that left kind of a stain of

shame. Were there any words that allowed you to start letting go of the past and to forgive yourself? Cultivate a more friendly relationship with your body? If so, if there were some particular words, you can even write them on a sticky note and post them somewhere in your home until they're etched in your mind. You know, some prompt to help you cultivate an attitude of friendship with your precious body. And again, thank you. Thank you for your practice.