

Audio File Transcript

Saying No to Devaluing Messages

This practice is called saying no to devaluing messages. So you'll be invited to find a combination of gestures and words that evoke the energy of no in a way that feels both safe and empowering. And then in daily life, after you know how to generate this kind of protective self-compassion, you can be flexible in how you express it. So in this exercise we will be exploring externally derived shame messages and coming up with words and gestures to respond to them, and then also internally generated shame messages. Again, finding gestures and words. So to begin, please imagine that someone is crossing a personal boundary. So perhaps someone touched you in an unwelcome way or said something that hurt your feelings, or is asking you to do something you don't want to do. You know that what's happening is not good for you and you want it to stop. So just imagine such a scene and also feeling within what arises when that happens. And you might feel a lot of emotions, but for now, please get in touch with the protective energy arising within you. Perhaps you feel angry or defiant or even contempt. Or maybe you feel stubborn or strong or fierce. Connecting with that protective energy. And if you were going to make a gesture that captures your determination to protect yourself, what might that be? This may not be a gesture that you would actually do with somebody in that situation, but a gesture that captures that determination.

So some possibilities are, and you can even do this right now, standing up and tall with your hands squarely placed on your hips with a defiant look in your eyes. Or you could stretch one arm forward with an open palm signaling stop, stop. Or you can cross your forearms as if you were blocking a punch. Or perhaps you could even sweep your arms, both arms, decisively in front of your body, like forming an invisible shield. Or maybe there's another gesture that captures this self-protective spirit. Maybe there's another gesture that makes you feel strong and protected. And if there were some words that would come out of your mouth to stop this unacceptable behavior, what might they be? So for example, you could say What? Or you can't do this. Or not this. Or that's enough. Or perhaps they'd even be stronger where it's like, no! Or stop it! Or back off. or I'm done. So please try to find the right words for you that you might, for example, use in the situation that you were thinking about. And also the right tone, the right tone, the right amount of loudness and strength and emphasis. Not too much, not too little. Some people, they wish to start with a quiet but firm and then gradually maybe become louder and stronger. Maybe starting out strong is a little uncomfortable. So this is all experimentation. What feels comfortable for you and also helps you to feel safe and strong.

And after you find the right words and the right tone, you can actually combine them with the gesture that you discovered earlier for the full effect of fierce, protective self-compassion. So you can explore with some combinations, words and gestures, until you've captured the feeling and the attitude of no when your boundary is being crossed. And now let's explore internally derived shame messages when we're being threatened or challenged or a boundary is crossed internally because you can stand up to internal self-critical voices as well. And when we do so, our words and gestures, they may be less adversarial than against external shaming, but they carry the same resolve the same determination. So for example, you can imagine you have a teenager who has spoken disrespectfully to you one time too many and you're sick and tired of hearing it. You know it's not good for anyone and you want it to stop. So that's the attitude that we need to stand up to internalize shame messages.

So before we explore this, when you feel ashamed, what words do you hear internally? What kind of usually self-critical language? For example, you may hear words like, you're stupid, you're an idiot. And what's the tone of that? language? Is it harsh and impatient? So we want to just, as it were, get a sense of what we're standing up to. Also, how does it make you feel to be the recipient of internal criticism, self-criticism? So now let's explore some protective gestures. So what is your body posture like when criticism, self-criticism is going on even now? Do you tend to slump down or drop your head? So adopting the opposite posture can begin to reverse this impact. So for example, you could try sitting or standing right now upright. You can roll your shoulders back, you can lift your chest. And after you do that, how do you feel? If it feels good, you can hold that position for a few moments longer. You can savor the feeling. And is there a protective hand gesture that you would like to add to this protective body posture? For example, you could put a fist over your heart or sweep your hand. You could do any of the gestures that you did earlier. All to capture this spirit of inner strength and resolve, not to be crushed by internalized negative shaming voices. And are you tired of inner criticism? Do you want to take a stand? If so, are there any words which best capture this attitude? So again, the words we may use when we take a stand against inner criticism might be a little different than when the criticism is coming from outside. So maybe you just like to say to yourself in a strong and convinced way, this is not working for me. Or I am so tired of hearing this. Or not helpful at all. Or not me, not now, not my shame. Maybe there's some other words that capture your resolve to stand up to these old internalized habits of thinking. Words we learned from outside. So you can experiment with different kinds of words until you find some that land in just the right way for you and give you that feeling, that sense of resolve. Also experimenting with the right tone. It might be soft, might be loud, might be fierce, might be calm. What feels right to you? And you can also try a combination of words and gestures in just the right tone that makes you feel solid and strong. And then going forward, whenever you notice that inner shaming is going on, you can

remember the gesture, you can remember the language, just say it. Say it out loud to yourself or silently to yourself. And if there are situations in your life where you're being externally shamed, you can experiment with what actually could you say or do if there's anything that you can do that will make you feel safer and more protected. But for now in this exercise, we're just learning to take a stand. Gestures and words for taking a stand. This is the first step. Thank you.