

# Treat Yourself Like a Good Friend

## Objective

To strengthen your sense of self-worth by learning to feel more compassion for yourself.

## You Should Know

What is the first thing you do when someone you care for confides that they feel bad about themselves? For example, suppose they made a mistake at work and were reprimanded; perhaps they weren't invited to a party and were feeling lonely and unwanted; or what if they blame themselves for hurting someone's feelings, or feel incredibly guilty because they inadvertently caused an accident? You would no doubt feel compassion for that person. The first thing you would probably do is comfort them by using soothing words. The second thing would be to assure them that they were still a good person, just one who made a mistake or experienced a temporary setback.

The question for you is, can you honestly say that you treat yourself with the same consideration and compassion that you so readily give to the people you care about? The answer is, probably not. To change this you can learn and practice the art of self-compassion. Self-compassion means that you stop avoiding or escaping your emotional pain and instead learn to acknowledge how difficult your situation is, while thinking about how you can care for and comfort yourself during difficult times. You simply pledge to show yourself the same empathy, love, and care that you naturally feel and show toward others and commit to practice loving yourself, caring for yourself, and forgiving yourself.

## What to Do

Draw from the deep well of goodwill and empathy that you feel and exhibit toward others to tap into a boundless source of compassion that you can then extend to yourself. Compare and contrast how you hear yourself speaking and responding to the pain of others with how you usually respond to yourself.

Visualize yourself helping a friend who needs your support.

What feelings does seeing your friend trigger in you? (For example, immediate concern? Feelings of warmth? Disgust?)

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What do you say? (Something comforting? Friendly? Angry?)

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What tone do you use? (Harsh? Soft? Gentle?)

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How might you reference their past? (Draw on their strengths? Point out past mistakes?)

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What would you predict might happen in the future? (Learn from mistakes? Make the same mistakes again?)

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Now visualize yourself going through a difficult time. What feelings does thinking of yourself going through your difficult time trigger in you?

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What do you say to yourself?

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What tone do you imagine yourself using?

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How might you reference your past?

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What would you predict might happen in your future?

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What would it look like if you spoke to yourself the way you spoke to someone else who was in a crisis?

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What has this activity taught you about the relationship between self-compassion, weakness, and strength?

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How might your life change or remain the same if you acted with self-compassion toward yourself on a regular basis?

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Imagine that you made a plan to treat yourself with kindness every day. What would that plan look like?

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### **Reflections on This Exercise**

How helpful was this exercise? \_\_\_\_\_

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

Is there anything in particular you learned from this exercise?

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