

# Practicing Self-Kindness

## Objective

To identify ways to increase kindness toward yourself.

## What to Know

Self-compassion involves treating yourself with kindness. Self-kindness refers to acting in kind and understanding ways toward yourself. Instead of being critical, your inner voice is supportive and warm.

Kindness is a quality you might look for in your friends, co-workers, and romantic partners. You might practice “random acts of kindness,” and intentionally act kindly toward others. But are you kind to yourself? Did you know self-kindness is an essential component of mental health? Here are some suggestions to help you practice self-kindness.

- override negative inner dialogue with a kind, compassionate, and forgiving voice
- instead of berating yourself when you make mistakes, treat yourself with compassion
- offer yourself encouraging words like, “You’ve got this!” and “You tried your best”
- give yourself guilt-free time off
- commit to doing at least one thing each day that is just for you
- self-soothe when you are going through a difficult time
- focus on the values and qualities you admire
- practice daily affirmations to shift negative self-talk

Sometimes being kind to yourself means protecting yourself (e.g., saying “no”), eating and sleeping well, or motivating yourself like you would encourage a friend. Remember, you deserve your own kindness! This worksheet will help you identify ways to be kinder to yourself.

## What to Do

Over the next month or so complete all the following activities and write about your experiences.

**1. Schedule time for yourself.** Carve out time for yourself each day in your planner or digital calendar. Perhaps you will take a walk, play a musical instrument, or do anything else that brings you pleasure. Use the following chart for one week to record your experience.

Date	How you felt before the activity	Activity	How you felt after the activity

**2. Give yourself recognition.** You might acknowledge the achievements of others, but rarely acknowledge your own. Focus on your own achievements and give yourself some recognition! How can you do this regularly?

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**3. Boost your inner advocate.** You are probably aware of your inner critic – the little voice in your head that is quick to judge and ready with a putdown. Make your inner advocate’s voice louder than your inner critic’s. Allow your inner advocate to jump in and present arguments on your behalf. What are some things your inner advocate might say?

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**4. Practice forgiving yourself.** If you are angry about something you said or did, stop blaming yourself and resolve to do better in the future. Is there something you can forgive yourself for – right now?

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**5. Take care of yourself.** A great way to show yourself kindness is to take good care of yourself. Get enough sleep, eat a nutritious diet, and exercise regularly. Find healthy ways to release stress. What are some areas you can take better care of yourself?

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**6. Respect yourself.** Value yourself for who you are and do not allow others to define your value. This involves trusting yourself, keeping promises to yourself, thinking for yourself, forming your own opinions, making your own decisions, and refusing to compare yourself to others. What are some ways you can respect yourself?

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**7. Treat yourself.** If you want something, treat yourself. If it is more than you can afford, save for it. How can you treat yourself?

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**8. Soothe yourself.** Do one of the following activities after a tough day.

- Soak in a hot tub.
- Give yourself a scalp or foot massage.
- Make hot cocoa and relax with a good book.
- Turn on music and dance.
- What else can you do? \_\_\_\_\_

**9. Remind yourself of your positive qualities.** Write down your good qualities.

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**10. Lift yourself up when you fail or make a mistake.** Come up with a plan for dealing with what happened and take action. Remind yourself of past successes and write down how you can deal with an error, mistake or recent failure.

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**11. Honor your dreams.** Avoid downplaying your dreams by labeling them as silly or unrealistic. Take them seriously and turn them into goals. Create a plan for achieving one goal. What can you do right now to take action on a dream?

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**12. Stop trying to be perfect.** Instead of setting a standard of “perfection” for yourself, aim to improve one area of your life one step at a time. In what area of your life can you drop perfectionism and focus instead on small improvements?

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**13. Be self-compassionate.** Imagine someone you love is hurt and answer the following questions.

What would you say? \_\_\_\_\_

How would you treat them? \_\_\_\_\_

How would you reassure them? \_\_\_\_\_

How would you make them feel cared for and loved? \_\_\_\_\_

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**14. Accept yourself.** You have strengths and weaknesses, and sometimes you succeed while other times you fail. Can you allow yourself to be fully who you are? Why or why not?

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Do you struggle with self-criticism? If so, do you feel like you are trying to prove something to yourself or others? When did this start?

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Write down five things you are grateful for about yourself.

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### **Reflections on This Exercise**

How helpful was this exercise? \_\_\_\_\_  
(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What did you learn from this exercise?

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