



**Understanding & learning  
how to be self-compassionate**  
A workbook & guide

## An introduction



### **“If your compassion does not include yourself, it is incomplete” – Buddha**

Self-compassion involves being gentle, kind and understanding with yourself. It is particularly important when we are experiencing pain or feeling self-critical. It sounds like a straightforward concept but in practice, we often find it difficult to be kind to ourselves. This guide will explore what it means to be self-compassionate, the evolutionary basis of self-compassion, barriers to self-compassion, and techniques for developing self-compassion.

# What is self compassion?

Being kind to yourself means that you treat yourself with the same compassion that you treat others. Self-compassion is about being accepting and understanding of yourself without judgement or criticism and being able to recognise your value and worth as a human being. When having a difficult time, a self-compassionate person would acknowledge their difficulty and ask themselves how they might comfort and care for themselves, rather than being self-critical. Human suffering is inevitable and having compassion for yourself ultimately means accepting that you are human.

Self-compassion researcher Dr Kristin Neff suggests that self-compassion is made up of three elements which interact to form a self-compassionate frame of mind:

## 1 Self-kindness as opposed to self-criticism

Self-kindness refers to acting in kind and understanding ways towards ourselves. This is especially important when we feel inadequate. Rather than ignoring our pain or being self-critical, our inner voice is gentle, supportive, and warm. If we are self-critical or deny our feelings when faced with difficulties, this tends to result in stress and frustration. Instead, acknowledging and accepting these with kindness helps us to balance our emotions.

## 2 Sense of common humanity as opposed to self as isolated

A sense of common humanity is the recognition that part of being human is our imperfection, vulnerability, and personal inadequacy. When we feel inadequate, it is easy to feel as though we are alone in our suffering or tendency to make mistakes. Accepting that suffering is a shared human experience can reduce feelings of isolation and provide comfort when encountering pain or suffering.

## 3 Mindfulness as opposed to over-identifying

Mindfulness means being aware of our negative emotions in a way which helps us to avoid suppressing or exaggerating our feelings. This involves a willingness to observe our negative thoughts and emotions as they are, without judgement or attempts to suppress or deny them. Mindfulness involves taking a step back from how we think and feel, to become intentionally aware without becoming overwhelmed with negative thoughts and feelings. This is an important part of self-compassion as it helps us to notice what is happening for us and have more control over how we choose to respond.



**Self-compassion is our inner cheerleader**

## Understanding self-compassion

To understand self-compassion, we also need to understand self-criticism. Self-criticism is something that most people experience to varying degrees and relates to our internal voice, or 'inner critic' who insults, undermines, and criticises us. What our inner critic tells us is different for each of us, but it might sound something like:

"You're not good enough"

"You're so stupid"

"You're such a failure"

Having these thoughts can lead to negative cycles where we find it difficult to look after ourselves and feel worthless, incompetent, and insecure. It is like having someone there who is constantly highlighting negative things in your life and telling you that it is all your fault.

Where self-criticism tells us we aren't good enough, self-compassion is related to our 'inner cheerleader', who is on our side and encourages, supports and believes in us. Self-compassion is essentially like a good friend who cares about us and has our best interests at heart.

If you feel very self-critical a lot of the time, you are not alone! For many people, it is very hard to ignore their 'inner critic' and listen to their 'inner cheerleader'.



**Our inner critic insults, undermines and criticises us and makes us feel bad**

Can you think of any situations where you are overly self-critical and struggle to be self-compassionate? Write them down here.

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What does your 'inner critic' tell you? Write them here.

How does your behaviour change when you listen to your inner critic? Make a note here.

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You might be wondering why we find it so hard to be kind to ourselves. There are different reasons for this, including:

- Evolution and emotion regulation
- Genetics
- Environment and early experiences

These are important factors in understanding self-compassion and the development of self-criticism and we will look at each of these in turn.

## Evolution and the brain

Our brains are very complex and have evolved over thousands of years. One of the reasons that we feel difficult emotions is that our brain was designed to help us survive and has not evolved to maintain a healthy or positive mindset.

Instead, our brain has developed to maintain a 'threat mindset', which helps us to recognise danger and keep us safe. When we perceive threat, this mindset is activated, and our body automatically reacts by going into:

- **Fight mode:** you confront the threat
- **Flight mode:** you escape the danger
- **Freeze mode:** you feel unable to move or act against the threat
- **Fawn mode:** you comply with the threat

This was a very helpful function in the times of physical threat. For example, if we saw a sabre toothed tiger, our threat mindset would help us to react in a way which kept us safe. However, the way that our brains have developed means that we react in the same way to perceived danger, even when there is not any 'real' threat.



There are many situations which we may perceive as threatening and our brains will respond as if we are in danger, leading to the fight-flight-freeze-fawn response. Each person will perceive different situations as threatening, based on individual experiences.

Some examples of perceived threats in modern day society include:

- Making a small mistake at work
- Someone we know not saying hello to us
- Being late to a meeting
- A friend cancelling on us last-minute

These examples are perceived to threaten different areas of our lives. This means that we are often on high alert so that we are aware of any danger in order to protect ourselves. Because we are on high alert for these things most of the time, it makes it difficult to be self-compassionate and recognise the positive things in life.

## Emotion regulation & self-compassion

The way our emotions are regulated is linked to evolution and plays an important role in self-compassion. Emotion regulation describes our ability to control our emotional reactions to different experiences.

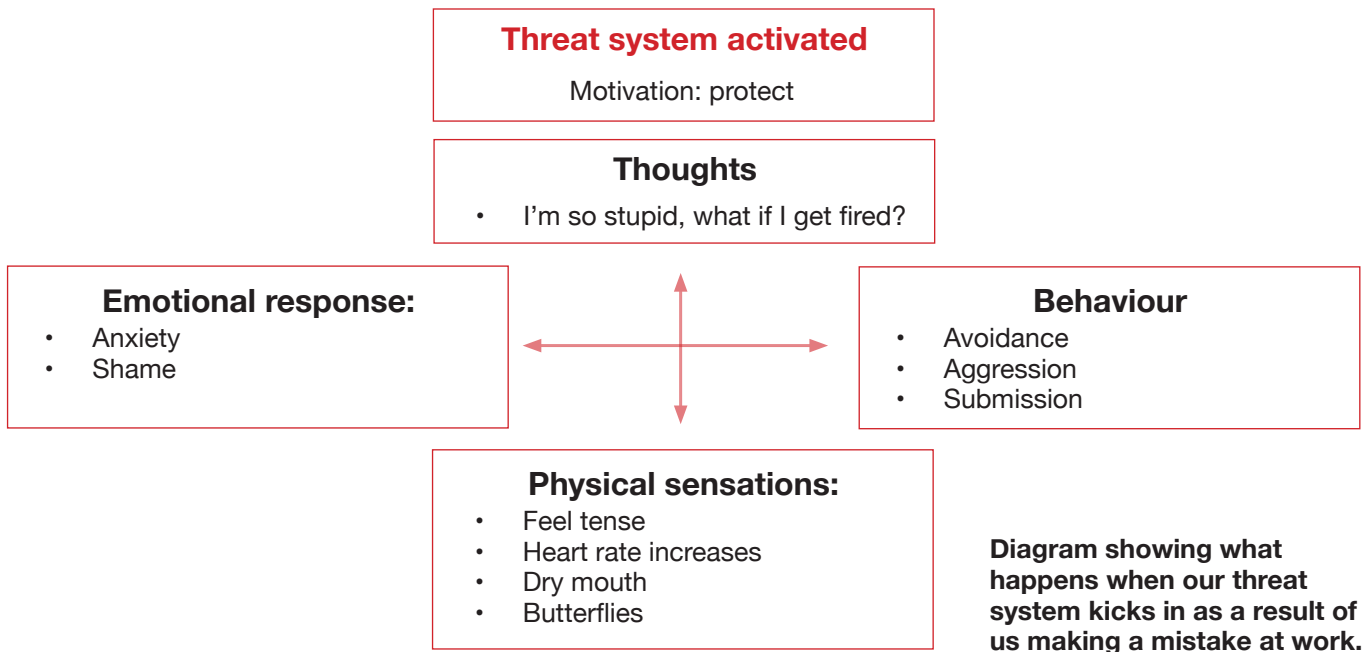
Psychologist Paul Gilbert proposed that we have three main types of emotion regulation system:

- The threat system
- The drive system
- The soothing system

Each of these systems plays an important role in regulating our emotions and drives our responses to different situations.

**Our threat mindset is designed to keep us safe from 'real' threats such as sabre-toothed tigers, but it springs into action when we find ourselves in situations that we perceive as threatening in modern day life.**





## The threat system

The threat system makes up the threat mindset that all human beings possess. It is our default setting in which we keep an eye out for threats and means that we are often looking for and thinking about negative things. Our threat system is often in overdrive because modern day society poses a number of threats, such as those listed previously.

When our threat system is active, we experience emotions which are there to protect us, such as anxiety, anger, or depression. These are linked to the fight-flight-freeze-fawn response. Our thinking also becomes narrow and negative because we need to focus on the danger. This means that we struggle to think rationally about the perceived threat because our brains were not designed to think this way when faced with danger. Essentially, our old survival mechanisms take over.

Let's take the example of a mistake made at work as a way of our threat system being activated (see *diagram above*). This example shows that something which seems small and 'non-threatening' can lead to the threat system being activated, resulting in self-criticism, anxiety, and shame. Can you see how the threat system drives our inner critic?

It's important to remember this cycle as people often criticise themselves even more when they feel distressing emotions. They don't realise that their minds were built to be irrational when sensing danger, as a means of protection. It isn't our fault that we respond in this way!

## The drive system

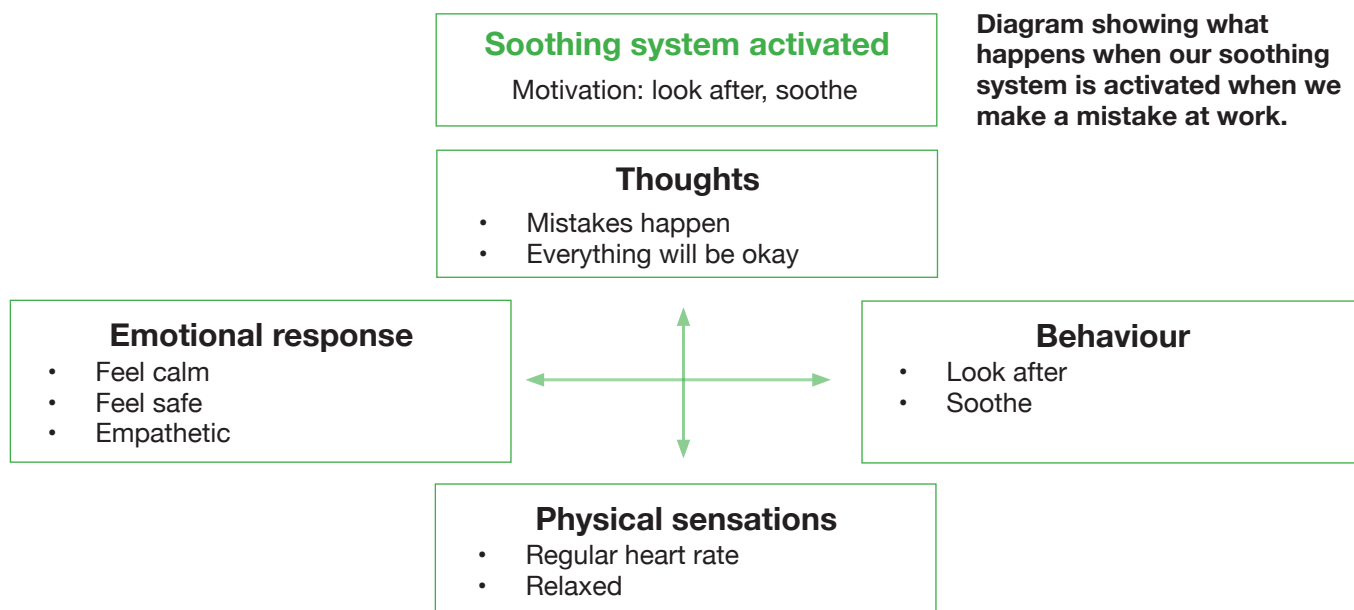
The drive system stimulates us towards achievement, to try new things and work towards goals. The positive aspect of this system is that it drives our motivation and keep us going forwards in life. However, the drive system can be at risk of kicking into overdrive particularly in environments where we are told that we can constantly do better and achieve more. This pressure means that we become focused on achieving more and more and sometimes don't manage to recognise the things that we have achieved already or are doing well in. When this happens, or when we don't manage to meet our goals, we then flip into the threat system.

Again, think of the example of making a small mistake at work. If our drive system was spurring us on to do well at work and we make a mistake, then we might flip into our threat system which tells us that, because we have failed, something bad is going to happen (such as getting fired).

## The soothing system

The soothing system helps to calm down the threat and drive systems when they are overactive. This system is stimulated by experiences of kindness and care, from other people and from yourself. This is the system which is most difficult to activate and takes more work.

The soothing system is activated when we are self-compassionate. It drives our 'inner cheerleader'. Using the same example of making a mistake at work, see how the activation of the soothing system results in very different emotional, physical, cognitive, and behavioural responses.





## The importance of self-awareness

As well as reminding ourselves why we respond to situations in different ways, particularly when our threat system is activated, it is also important to notice what activates our threat system. Getting to know our own personal triggers is an important step in gaining control over how we feel, think, and behave in difficult situations.

Can you think of any examples in your own life of things that might trigger your threat system?

### Situations

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### Thoughts

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### Emotional responses

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### Behaviours

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Write down any situations, thoughts, emotional responses, and behaviours which trigger your threat system

## Other reasons why we find it difficult to be self-compassionate

### Genetics

In addition to how the human brain has developed, the genes we inherit from our biological parents affect how our individual minds develop. It is important to remember that, like the way our brains have evolved, these genetic vulnerabilities are not our fault and we did not have any control over these. What we do have control over is taking responsibility for working towards how we would like to be.

### Environment and early experiences

Our individual brain development is also affected by our environment and early experiences. The circumstances in which we grew up shapes who we are as people and contributes to the development of self-criticism and difficulties with being self-compassionate. Like our genes, we don't get to choose our early lives and experiences.

Our relationships with our caregivers and the environment we grow up in play a very important role in the way in which we relate to ourselves.

Our 'inner critic' often has origins in our developmental past and early experiences.

Individuals who grow up in an environment where there were high levels of stress, limited care, kindness, and nurturing from others are likely to have an underdeveloped soothing system and few models of self-compassion to draw upon.

In contrast to this, growing up in an environment which felt safe and secure, with supportive and loving relationships with caregivers, is likely to lead to a capacity for self-compassion.

Culture also plays an important role in difficulties with self-kindness. For instance, Western Culture has a strong 'stiff-upper-lip' tradition in which we should carry on without complaint. This means that when something bad happens, we tend to dismiss this and carry on without acknowledgement, understanding or self-kindness.

Because of this attitude (as well as other factors such as early experiences), individuals may associate self-compassion with weakness or being self-indulgent. Some people may also develop beliefs that self-criticism can help motivate self-improvement or that this is an appropriate self-punishment.

Research shows that:

- Individuals who grow up with a parent who is very critical of them are likely to experience high levels of self-criticism because they have internalised their parent's messages.
- Someone who grows up in an environment where there was a lot of anger and conflict is likely to have a highly developed threat system because they had to be on high alert for danger growing up.
- Early positive relationships with caregivers are associated with self-compassion. An individual who feels loved and cared for growing up is likely to treat themselves with the same love and care, because they feel worthy of this.

If I develop  
compassion towards  
myself, this means  
I am weak!

If I let myself feel  
sad or anxious  
then I will become  
overwhelmed!

Self criticism  
makes me a better  
person!

I don't deserve to  
be kind to myself!

Being kind to  
myself means  
that I won't get  
anything done!

**Common  
beliefs which  
can fuel our  
inner critic and  
hinder our  
inner cheer  
leader**

These beliefs create barriers to engaging in self compassion.

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Why do you think you might find it difficult to be self-compassionate?

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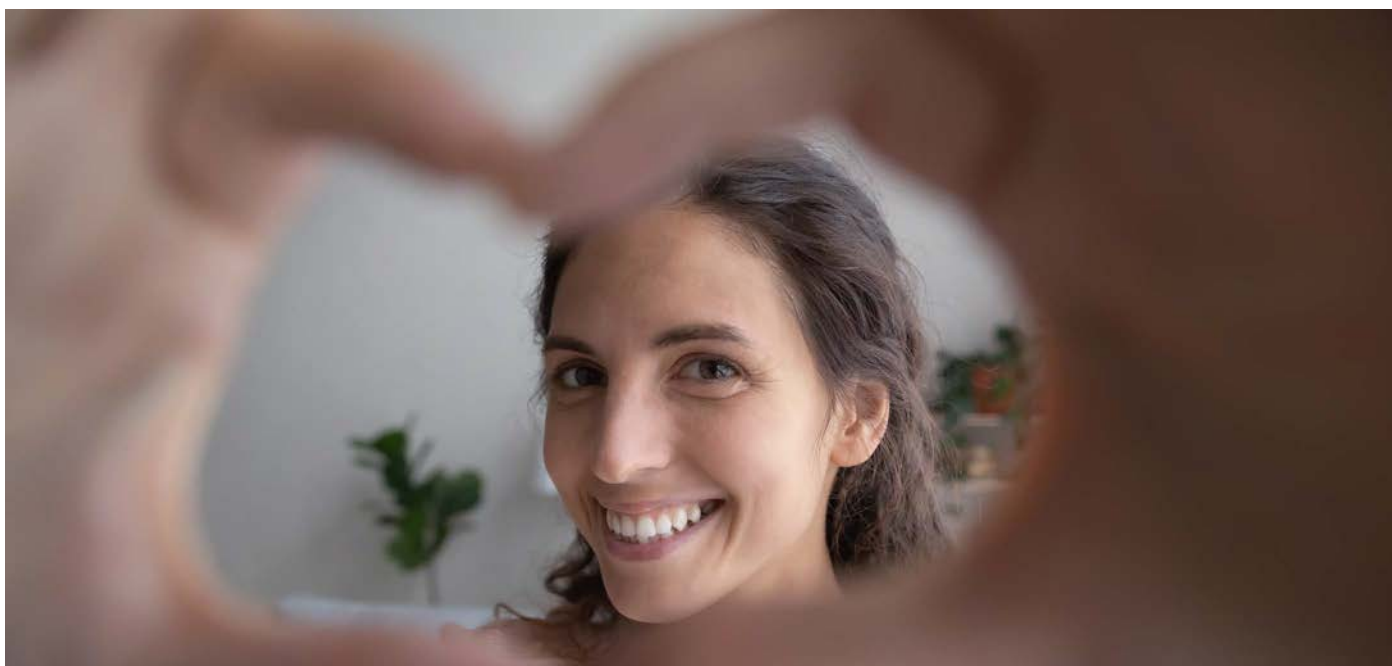
What are your beliefs about self-compassion and self-criticism? Write them here.

Why do you think you find it difficult to be self-compassionate?

**REMEMBER**

When we are finding it difficult to be kind to ourselves and get caught up in self-criticism and shame, it is helpful to remind ourselves that it is not our fault that we think this way. It is because of the way that our brains have developed, which is also influenced by our genes, environment, and early experiences – factors over which we have no control.





## Why is it important to be kind to ourselves?

There are many reasons why self-compassion is important and beneficial. We need to be able to be kind to ourselves because life is a struggle and we encounter inescapable challenges which are part of being human. We need self-compassion to look after ourselves, our mental health and wellbeing and to balance our emotions.

The benefits of developing self-compassion:

- Being able to recognise how we are feeling means that we are able to look after ourselves more effectively.
- By being mindful, we become aware of how we feel which means that we are able to take control of the difficult feelings and choose how we might respond.
- Greater self-compassion is linked to less anxiety and depression. One of the reasons for this is because self-criticism is known to be an important predictor of anxiety and depression and a key feature of self-compassion is a lack of self-criticism.
- Self-compassion reduces the risk of self-criticism and allows us to be open and receptive to our pain rather than rejecting it.
- We can recognise when we are suffering and be kind to ourselves during that time rather than continue to self-criticise.
- Because self-compassionate people are able to accept their human imperfection with kindness, they have been found to worry less than those who lack self-compassion.
- Self-compassion increases motivation, boosts happiness, enhances self-worth and fosters resilience.
- It can help relieve psychological distress such as anxiety and depression.

### **Self-criticism:**

- makes it harder to look after ourselves
- can result in anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, self-destructive behaviours
- leads to negative cycles of thoughts, feelings, behaviour

**Self-compassion is the antidote to self-criticism!**

# Getting in touch with your compassionate self: developing self-compassion

The good news is that there are lots of different and varied ways to develop self-compassion and incorporate it into daily life. This guide offers some examples below which you can try out and see what works for you.

## Using a metaphor to develop self-awareness

Earlier in the guide, we spoke about the importance of self-awareness. By being mindful, we become aware of how we feel which means that we are able to take control of the difficult feelings and choose how we might respond.

It can be challenging to identify when we are being self-critical, especially if we have grown used to speaking to ourselves in a harsh way. Metaphors can be a useful way of helping us to notice when we are being self-critical and reminding us to be kinder to ourselves. By doing this, we are being mindful of our self-talk which is an important aspect of self-compassion.

### Remember

Don't despair if you feel like the exercises and techniques don't work straight away – developing self-compassion is like getting physically fit, it takes practice and time to build up strength in your self-compassion muscle!

### The story of two wolves

An old Cherokee is teaching his grandson about life: “A fight is going on inside me,” he said to the boy. “It is a terrible fight and it is between two wolves. One is bad – he is anger, envy, sorrow, regret, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, inferiority, lies, false pride, superiority, and ego.”

He continued, “The other is good – he is joy, peace, love, hope, serenity, humility, kindness, benevolence, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion, and faith. The same fight is going on inside you – and inside every other person, too.”

The grandson thought about it for a minute and then asked his grandfather, “Which wolf will win?”

The old Cherokee simply replied, “The one you feed.”

The bad wolf is a representation of your inner critic and the good wolf represents self-compassion. It can be helpful to use this metaphor to notice when you are being self-critical, by asking yourself which wolf you are feeding.



**The good wolf  
(self-compassion)**

- Understanding
- Kind
- Empathic
- Practises self-care



**The bad wolf  
(self-critical)**

- Denies feelings
- Blames
- Judges negatively
- Self-critical

Both wolves will always be there, it's part of being human. Focusing on feeding the 'good wolf' does not mean that you should forget about the 'bad wolf'. Being self-compassionate means that you acknowledge the 'bad wolf' but focus your attention on feeding the 'good wolf'.

The following exercises provide ideas for how you can feed your 'good wolf' and develop self-compassion.

## Exercise 1: Developing a compassionate image

Using compassionate imagery can be a powerful way of developing our ability to be self-compassionate. Creating and bringing to mind a compassionate image triggers our soothing system which leads to us thinking, feeling and behaving in self-compassionate ways. The beauty of imagery is that you can use it at any time and any place. Developing a compassionate image involves creating and building an imaginary idea of compassion. The image needs to be wise, understanding, strong, warm, and non-judgemental.

First, get into a comfortable position and begin to notice your breathing. Gently slow down your breathing a little and notice the rhythm of your breath. When you feel ready, allow an image to arise that represents compassion for you....an image which is wise and strong...that shows kindness, care and concern for you...that accepts you for who you are... that demonstrates a sense of understanding for you and your feelings... (Don't worry if an image doesn't come to mind straight away or you get distracted, just gently bring your attention back to breathing. If you don't have a clear image, that's okay, having a felt sense of an image will work too).

Once you have a sense of your compassionate image, begin to build your image further. See overleaf for some questions you can ask yourself that might help to build this image.

What does your compassionate image look like? Real, imagined, human, animal, light, nature?	
Is the image young or old? What is its gender?	
What colours or light do you associate with the image?	
How would the image communicate or interact with you?	
What would their voice sound like for them to sound wise, understanding, kind and accepting?	
What expression would they have as they looked at you with with wisdom, understanding, compassion and acceptance?	
What does your compassionate image want you to know? What does it say to you?	
What does it do to help or comfort you?	
What do you feel as you spend time with your compassionate image? What do you notice?	

Creating your compassionate image might take a few attempts – remember to take your time and go at your own pace. There is no right or wrong, just whatever works for you in triggering feelings of compassion. Remember, you can bring this image to mind whenever you need to – it is always with you.



## Exercise 2: Creating a 'safe place'

This exercise is similar to the first exercise in that it uses your imagination and imagery to create somewhere in your mind that triggers feelings of compassion.

As before, get into a comfortable position and begin to notice your breathing. Gently slow down your breathing a little and notice the rhythm of your breath.

- When you feel ready, try to create a place in your mind where you feel safe, peaceful, and calm. This might be somewhere real, somewhere you have been to in the past or wish to go to, or a peaceful place within your imagination.
- Imagine looking around you, what can you see? Notice the colours and shapes around you.
- Now focus on what you can hear, any sounds around you that are close, far away, or perhaps you notice the silence.
- Next focus on any smells in the air that surrounds you.
- Focus on what you can feel, the sensation of the sun on your skin, the earth beneath you, the temperature of the breeze, and anything else that you can touch.
- Take a moment to notice how it feels to be in this safe, peaceful, and comfortable place. Notice any physical sensations in your body while you spend time here.
- When you bring your safe place to mind, notice any tension in your body and allow this to melt away and be replaced with warmth and relaxation.
- You can take as much time as you wish to experience and enjoy the peacefulness of your safe space. You might choose a word, phrase, or gesture (such as squeezing your thumb and forefinger together) that you can use to bring yourself back to your safe place.
- When you feel ready, gently open your eyes, and bring your awareness back to where you are.

If you like, you can write down the word, phrase, or gesture that you can use to bring yourself back to your safe place, as a reminder for yourself:

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### Remember

Remember, your safe space will always be here for you to come back to, whenever you need it.

## Exercise 3: Write a compassionate letter to yourself

Writing a letter to yourself can be a helpful way of expressing self-acceptance, understanding, and compassion. This might be particularly valuable when faced with difficulty or suffering. Writing a letter to yourself not only provides acknowledgement and understanding but can offer a compassionate perspective to the situation which can help influence the way we think and choose to act in a situation.

The most important part of writing a compassionate letter to yourself is to write it as if it were from someone who cares for you, understands you, and accepts you for who you are. You can use your compassionate image to write this letter, or an imaginary friend. Imagine that whoever is writing this letter is supportive, understanding, accepting, wise, kind, and forgiving. As you think about your experiences, write what your imaginary friend or compassionate image might say to you as you think about yourself and your experiences.

Below are some suggestions for writing your compassionate letter to yourself:

- Notice what you're struggling with, acknowledge how you are feeling, and that it is okay to feel this way.
- Remind yourself that you are human, everyone makes mistakes and you are not alone in your struggle.
- Write what your kind, wise, forgiving imaginary friend or compassionate image might offer as an alternative perspective to the situation and how you might think about things differently.
- Add any suggestions that you think your imaginary friend or compassionate image might offer to help you feel better, address the problem, and move on from it.
- Think about how your imaginary friend or compassionate image would say these things in a kind, understanding, warm way to you.

Take time to read this letter and allow yourself to really absorb the words. Notice how this feels.

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Here is some space to write ideas of what you might include in your compassionate letter to yourself.

## Exercise 4: Mindfulness and breathing

A common misconception of mindfulness is that it involves completely clearing your mind. In fact, mindfulness means observing whatever is happening in the present moment and an important part of this is noticing. Everything that we do can involve mindfulness.

Many people find it difficult or frustrating when they notice that they're unable to focus on the present moment. However, noticing that your attention is wandering and gently bringing back your focus is an important part of mindfulness. With time and practice, you will begin to train your brain to maintain focus for longer periods of time.

Mindful breathing can be a helpful way to develop skills in self-awareness and noticing, as well as reducing tension and levels of stress. The following exercise is designed to teach you how to pay attention in a gentle and kind way, allowing thoughts and feelings to come and go without getting caught up in them.

- Begin by getting into a comfortable seated position, with your feet flat on the floor. Rest your hands on your legs and close your eyes.
- Gently bring your attention to your breathing. Notice the rhythm of your breath as you breathe in and out.
- Imagine that you have a balloon in your tummy. With every inhale, the balloon inflates, and every exhale deflates. You can place your hands on your tummy to help you feel the rise and fall of your abdomen with each breath.
- Whenever you notice that your focus has drifted, with thoughts or external distractions, simply notice this without judgement or self-criticism and gently bring your focus back to your breathing.
- When you feel ready, gently open your eyes.

If you like, you can add compassionate colours to this exercise:

- After engaging in your mindful breathing for a few moments, imagine a colour that you associate with compassion, warmth, or kindness.
- Once you have a colour in mind, imagine that the balloon in your tummy is this colour.
- As you breathe in, feel the warmth, kindness, and compassion of the colour fill the balloon in your tummy.
- Notice how this feels and spend as much time as you like focusing on your breathing and the sensation of the balloon inflating and deflating with your compassionate colour.
- When you feel ready, gently open your eyes.



### TIP

Some people find breathing exercises difficult and this can actually make them feel more anxious. Try this exercise for a few moments and if you find it isn't helpful for you, then try a different exercise.

### TIP

It takes practice to be self-compassionate. Some of these techniques might work for you and some might not. They might work for you one day and not the next. It's important to be gentle with yourself and take your time to figure out what works for you.

# Compassion-based therapies

## Compassion focused therapy (CFT)

Compassion focused therapy, commonly known as CFT, is a type of psychotherapy which aims to promote mental wellbeing by encouraging self-compassion.

Psychologist Paul Gilbert developed CFT to specifically address shame and self-criticism, drawing on evolutionary, social, developmental, and Buddhist psychology and neuroscience. CFT is often used to help people struggling with shame and self-criticism, which can result in anxiety and depression.

CFT is particularly helpful for those who have deep feelings of shame or guilt, a history of bullying, a history of physical or emotional abuse, an unrelenting inner critic, difficulties to feel kind towards themselves. Developing skills in self-compassion can be helpful to everyone, as self-compassion is considered to be an essential aspect of wellbeing which improves self-esteem and promotes resilience.

CFT is grounded in the current understanding of basic emotion regulation systems: the threat system, the drive system, and the soothing system, discussed earlier in the guide. CFT highlights the association between these systems and psychological distress, with the aim to promote emotion regulation through balancing these systems.

CFT aims to help us understand and become aware of how we are feeling and the way in which our brains react to certain situations. There are lots of different tools and techniques used within CFT, drawn from other therapies such as Cognitive-Behavioural Therapy (CBT) and Mindfulness. The primary technique used in CFT is called compassionate mind training, or CMT. This aims to help people experience compassion and reduce the strength of their inner critic.

“CFT is often used to help people struggling with shame and self-criticism, which can result in anxiety and depression.”



## Acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT)

ACT is one of the ‘third wave’ of behaviour therapies, along with Dialectical Behaviour Therapy, Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy, and several others. ACT combines mindfulness skills with the practice of self-acceptance. Some of the key elements of the model of ACT are consistent with conceptualisations of self-compassion, but use different language.

ACT proposes that psychological distress arises as a result of avoiding or rejecting unwanted internal experiences (such as unpleasant thoughts, feelings, sensations, urges and memories). Although this might feel helpful in the short-term, in the long term this avoidance leads to significant psychological difficulties.

ACT encourages people to embrace their thoughts and feelings rather than feeling guilty for them or rejecting them. Central to ACT is the idea that we must accept what is out of our personal control and commit to action that improves and enriches our lives.

Similar to CFT, ACT is based on the concept that suffering is a natural and inevitable condition for humans. ACT uses techniques such as mindfulness, acceptance, and commitment to values-based living. ACT aims to promote awareness of our feelings and to accept these rather than trying to control them.

ACT has been found to be effective for a wide range of psychological difficulties such as anxiety, depression, obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), addictions, stress, and self-harm, among other issues.

“ACT encourages people to embrace their thoughts and feelings rather than feel guilty for or rejecting them.”

## Mindfulness

Mindfulness therapy is concerned with being consciously aware of our present moment, in an open and non-judgemental way. The focus is on increasing awareness of our thoughts, feelings, and actions, particularly ones which may be distressing or unhelpful. By developing our ability to notice and be aware, we learn how to engage with those parts of ourselves and can choose how to respond.

As discussed throughout this guide, mindfulness is an important component of self-compassion. Mindfulness and self-compassion are closely linked constructs, as each involve being aware and open to our feelings without judgement or self-criticism. Mindfulness helps us to notice what is happening for us and have more control over how we choose to respond, which allows for the opportunity to engage in self-compassion rather than a typical default response of self-criticism.

Mindfulness is often coupled with other types of therapy, such as CFT, ACT or CBT. Mindfulness therapy can be useful for a wide range of people and is effective in reducing stress, rumination, emotional reactivity and improving memory, focus and psychological wellbeing. Mindfulness meditation has been shown to affect how the brain works and even its structure. Research shows that individuals practising mindfulness have shown increased activity in the pre-frontal cortex, the area of the brain associated with positive emotion.

To find out more about Mindfulness, you can download First Psychology's Mindfulness booklet at:  
<https://www.firstpsychology.co.uk/files/mindfulness-booklet.pdf>

**“Mindfulness and self-compassion are closely linked constructs, as each involves being aware and open to our feelings without judgement or self-criticism.”**

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## Summary of key points

Self-compassion involves being gentle, kind and understanding with yourself. It's particularly important when we are experiencing pain or feeling self-critical.

It can be hard to be self-compassionate because our brains have evolved to be on high alert looking for danger in order to protect ourselves. This makes it difficult for us to recognise the positive things in life.

We activate our 'soothing system' when we are self-compassionate. It drives our inner cheerleader and results in positive, emotional, physical, cognitive and behavioural responses.

Self-compassion reduces the risk of self-criticism and allows us to be open and receptive to our pain rather than rejecting it.

Because self-compassionate people are able to accept their human imperfections with kindness, they have been found to worry less than those who lack self compassion.

Self compassion motivates, boosts happiness, enhances self-worth, and fosters resilience.





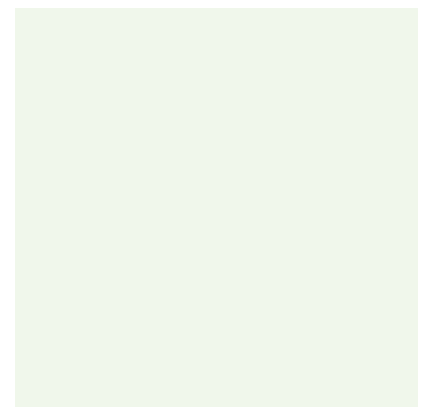
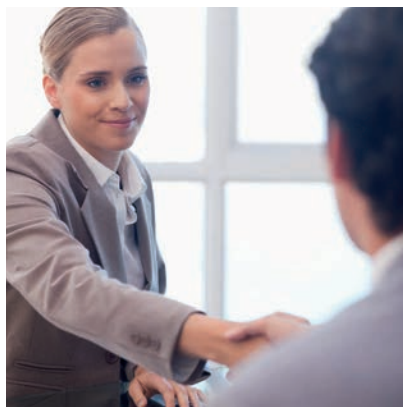
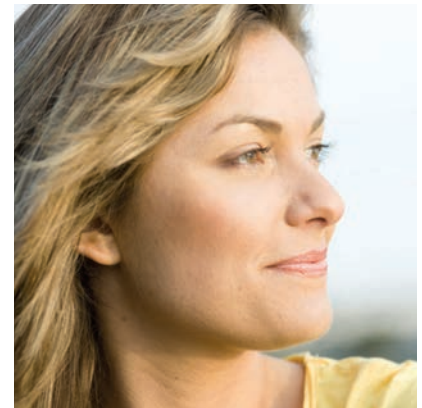
Our highly qualified and experienced team at First Psychology Scotland offers a variety of therapy services and works with people with a wide range of issues and problems.

We provide:

- Therapy and coaching services for women, men, couples, children, young people and families.
- Employee counselling, CBT & psychological therapies; promotion of wellbeing in the workplace; and rehabilitation and personal injury support.

All First Psychology practitioners have excellent qualifications and experience, so you can come to us knowing that you will see an experienced professional.





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Employee counselling, CBT & psychological therapies; promoting wellbeing in the workplace; and rehabilitation and personal injury support.

Aberdeen | Borders | Dundee | Edinburgh | Glasgow | Inverness | Perth  
and also Online

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