

UWE Wellbeing Service

Contending with self-criticism



Do you find that you often blame yourself if things aren't quite right? Do you experience frequent thoughts of not being good enough or trying hard enough? Do you have a harsh self-critic who hounds you and is continually on your case?

Although these thoughts may have a background intention to improve us, this is not usually what results. Instead, we are more likely to find ourselves vulnerable to feelings of shame, inadequacy and unworthiness.

"Love and compassion are necessities, not luxuries.

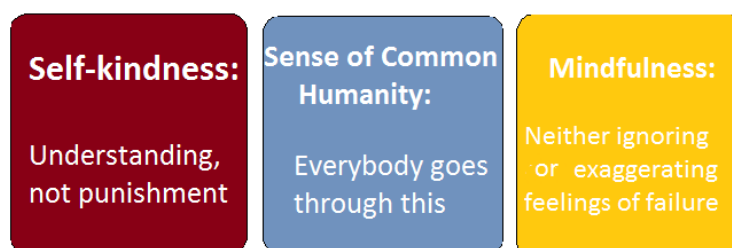
Without them, humanity cannot survive." *Dalai Lama*

However, what if instead of being your own worst enemy, you could be your own best friend?

Compassion and self-compassion are states of mind that we can foster and train ourselves in. Compassion literally means 'suffering with'. Instead of ignoring the pain that arises from finding fault with our various shortcomings and personal failings, we can pause to notice the thoughts, acknowledge the feelings and then find ways to comfort and care for ourselves.

Instead of operating from a mindset where we hold untenably high expectations of ourselves, often attempting to reach an impossible state of perfection, we can be more generous, trusting and accepting of ourselves. This, in turn, supports us to meet all that comes our way as experiences to learn and grow from.

Dr Kristin Neff: Three Elements of Self-Compassion



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Books

- Goldstein, E. (2015) **Uncovering Happiness**: Overcoming Depression with Mindfulness and Self Compassion
- Welford, M. (2013) **The Power of Self Compassion**: Using CFT to end Self-Criticism and Build Self-Confidence
- Neff, K. (2011) **Self-Compassion**
- Brown, B. (2010) **The Gifts of Imperfection**
- Gilbert, P. (2010) **The Compassionate Mind**
- Germer, C. (2009) **The Mindful Path to Self-Compassion**: Freeing yourself from Destructive Thought and Emotions
- Brach, T. (2003) **Radical Acceptance**

Websites

- **ACT** - The work of Stephen Hayes, Acceptance and Commitment therapy, lots of wonderful resources here too www.stevenchayes.com/
- **Get self-help** – CBT self-help and therapy resources <http://www.get.gg/>
- **Compassionate Mind Foundation** – audio, video, books, scales, exercises on how to build a compassionate image, compassionate letter writing etc. www.compassionatemind.co.uk
- **Self-compassion** full of great resources by Kirstin Neff www.self-compassion.org/
- **Mindful self-compassion** - handouts and meditations by Christopher Germer www.mindfulselfcompassion.org/

Video Links

- **Kirstin Neff on Self Esteem** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IvtZBUSplr4>
- **Brene Brown on Vulnerability** https://www.ted.com/talks/brene_brown_on_vulnerability?language=en
- **Brene brown on Shame** http://www.ted.com/talks/brene_brown_listening_to_shame?language=en

Apps

- **Stop, Breathe & Think** – app to support calm awareness and relaxation. <http://stopbreathethink.org/>
- **Compassion Today!** By the Charter for Compassion – daily quotes, news and action tips. 3 daily questions exercise and access to a world of compassion resources www.charterforcompassion.org/

