

Handout 4: Self-Compassion Break

When you experience a difficult moment in your day, take a few moments to say the following 3 phrases to yourself:

1. ***“This is a moment of suffering”*** (mindfulness)
(If the word “suffering” doesn’t resonate, try another phrase, like “This is difficult” or “This is a stressful moment.” The idea is to acknowledge that whatever you’re going through is difficult.)
2. ***“Suffering is a part of life”*** (common humanity)
(Remind yourself that this is part of the human experience. We all experience difficulties and this is something that connects us to each other, reminding us that we aren’t alone, even when it feels that way. Alternatives: “I’m not the only one who struggles with this” or “Other people feel this way too” or “We’re all in the same boat, trying to do the best we can with what we have.”)
3. ***“May I be kind to myself in this moment”*** (self-kindness)
or “May I accept myself just as I am”

For the third phrase, feel free to use whatever words speak to your particular situation. You might use the phrases you selected for yourself last week or you can ask yourself, **“What do I need to hear right now, as I am facing this difficulty?”** Try out a few different phrases until you hit on one or two that resonate with you in the moment:

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| May I believe in myself | May I find peace |
| May I be kind to myself, unconditionally | May I be safe |
| May I have contentment | May I be healthy |
| May I be happy and free from suffering | May we learn to live together in peace |
| May I have courage | May I cherish myself |

As you say these 3 phrases, you can also try putting your hands over your heart. This kind of physical gesture can help us to connect with our intention to respond to difficulties with kindness and caring. **The key is to offer yourself goodwill not to change the difficult emotions but *because* of the difficult emotions you’re feeling.** It’s like giving a hug to a child with the flu. You are not doing this to take away the flu but to give the child some comfort *because* he or she is feeling miserable.

Offering yourself kindness in moments of suffering is not about manipulating the particular circumstances of your life (e.g., “May I pass all my classes”). It’s about noticing your suffering and cultivating goodwill in the face of it, staying on the *wishing* side of the equation rather than the outcome side. Good feelings may come as a byproduct of this exercise, but the main purpose of this exercise is to cultivate a kind attitude in the face of suffering, regardless of what the outcome is.

You can practice this exercise with eyes closed or eyes open, for just a few seconds in the middle of a difficult situation or for longer. See what works for you.