

Exercise 4: Self-Compassionate Letter

Everybody has something about themselves they don't like - something that causes them to feel ashamed, insecure, or not "good enough." Please think of an issue you have that tends to make you feel bad about yourself (a mistake you made, your appearance, relationship issues, etc.).

Now, think about another person who is unconditionally loving, accepting, kind, and compassionate. This could be a real person, like a good friend or relative, or an imagined person. Imagine that this other person can see all your strengths and all your weaknesses, including what you don't like about yourself. This person recognizes the limits of human nature and is kind, accepting, and forgiving.

Write a letter to yourself from the perspective of this person and how they feel toward you related to this issue. What would this person say to you from the perspective of unlimited compassion? The letter should not tell you what you should or shouldn't do (it is not advice that you need, but support). What words of kindness could this person use to give you the emotional support and encouragement needed to help you do your best?

You can consider the following when writing your letter:

- What would this person say to show an understanding and appreciation of your suffering, your struggle, your efforts to change, and the pain you experience when you judge yourself harshly?
- How would this person express understanding for all the different factors beyond your control that led you to your current situation?
- What would this person write to remind you that you are only human, and that all people have both strengths and weaknesses?
- What would this person say to offer unconditional support, love, and acceptance?
- What would this person say to refocus your attention on what is actually helpful to you?
- What words of kindness would this person want you to have in mind as you face your difficulties?

If you are having trouble finding the words, that's okay - it takes some time. You might try thinking about what *you* would say to a dear friend that is struggling with the same issue you are. The important thing is that we set our intention to try to be kinder to ourselves and eventually new habits will form. Please write your letter on the following page:

