

Kindness CODE Workbook

Become the unconditional support

you've needed in your life.



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Introduction:

“

“Our task is not to seek for love, but merely to seek and find all the barriers within ourselves that we have built against it.”

Rumi

”

As we walk this world, shame and guilt can become overwhelming feelings. It seems like self-criticism and self-blame have become the normal response to pain, suffering and hardship in a society where we are either expected to grow or considered to be unworthy.

“Move on. Let go. Forget about this. Get over it.” These words have become the daily whipping we inflict ourselves in order to grow, evolve or just to avoid the uncomfortable feelings that are rising within ourselves.

But they have caused more damage than transformation in those who, by their behaviour, are trying to prove themselves worthy of the love, the happiness and the peace they truly desire. We don't want you to feel like you need to be more, do more, have more in order to deserve the love and the happiness that you want.

Actually, you already deserve them. You already do an incredible work at being yourself. Whatever you might think about it, you have done the right things, made the right decisions and taken the right actions up to now. We hope that through this workbook, you will see yourself as you truly are and you will be able to observe the perfection that we observe within yourself.





How to read

This book contains two main parts: in the first part, we will ask questions that are designed to make you become more self-aware, and to allow you to grow and see how you change and evolve over time.

In this section, you are invited to write down your answers, either to read them later or to let go of them.

You don't have to answer immediately but we do think it is important for you to take the time to put down an honest and sincere answer to each question, as it will help you know yourself more and more in the process, in addition to loving yourself better every single day.

We also give you insights and perspective on what kindness and the healing process are to us so that you can elevate your vision of what life can be when you are showing self-compassion to your inner self.

In the second section we give you ideas of practices you can test to deepen your knowledge and your understanding of yourself in order to create a virtuous circle of self-compassion and kindness in your daily life.

Before we go, a quick reminder: it is ok to be where you are, just as you are. We don't expect you to change, work harder on yourself or immediately transform your life.

This book is here to tell you that one thing that almost nobody tells you: you have the right to be you. You are loved and loveable exactly as you are. And we support you just this way.





Part 1: questions and insights.





What is Kindness to you?

When was the last time you were kind to yourself?


What we think about Kindness.



“Through self-compassion, we become an inner ally, engaged in patterns of behaviour that serve our higher self and cultivate a mindset that helps us to flourish.”

Keji





When we become mindful of our feelings and emotions and we respond to ourselves with compassion, kindness, and support in times of difficulty, things start to change. Despite our vulnerabilities, we can learn to embrace ourselves and our lives, thereby providing ourselves with the strength needed to be courageous on our healing journey.

Individuals who are more self-compassionate tend to have greater happiness, satisfaction about their life and motivation, better relationships and physical health, and less anxiety and depression. They also have the resilience needed to cope with stressful life events.

Learning to embrace yourself and to honour your moment of vulnerability gives you the resilience and courage to face another day. Self-compassion moves us closer to a place where our hearts respond with kindness to our pain.





How often do you criticize yourself? In which situations do you do this the most?

What effects did this approach have on you? How did you feel about it?

How could you be kinder to yourself today?





Where do self-compassion and kindness come from?

Self-compassion emerges from the heart of mindfulness when we experience difficult moments in our lives. Mindfulness invites us to open to suffering with loving, spacious awareness.

Self-compassion involves treating yourself the way you want others to treat you. Therefore the question is: how do you treat yourself when you feel inadequate or are facing a tough life challenge? Undoubtedly, society places great emphasis on being kind to our friends, family, and neighbours who are struggling. However, the same is not the case when it comes to us. Self-compassion is a practice in which we learn to earnestly befriend ourselves when we need it most—to become an inner ally rather than working against ourselves.

In difficult times, how do you like to be treated by others?

When we are in pain, there are three core elements we should bring to bear: self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness.

We already spoke about self-kindness and we will expand on mindfulness in a moment.





Now we want to focus on common humanity: this idea of common humanity refers to seeing our struggles and failures as core components of what makes us human, rather than as personal failings that separate and isolate us from other people whom we imagine are doing better than we are (which, unfortunately, we have often been conditioned to do).

Everybody fails and everybody makes mistakes. This can be an issue if you were not allowed to make them as a child, but as an adult you can learn to embrace your wrongs and make them right.

It is more about taking a step back to observe when it all started and give yourself the right to change your behaviour accordingly, than about fixing a situation that is common to every human. Who did everything perfectly right at their first try?

To our knowledge, nobody did. The brain was designed to learn from its experiences, not pick the perfect ways from an imaginary pool of perfect actions.

You have the right to be wrong sometimes, you have the right to experiment and you have the right to act and react differently to the same situation when it occurs again.

This is how you will grow and perfect yourself. It is ok to be imperfect until you find the perfect way for you to get things done. If your attitude hurt someone before, it's ok too: you have the right to apologize for the harm caused, and it is most likely not because of you that someone else feels hurt. We all have personal experiences and stories that can make a casual situation hurt more than it should have.

You are only responsible for how you feel, not for how others feel, although it is important to acknowledge that this was caused by your attitude in order to adapt your behaviour.

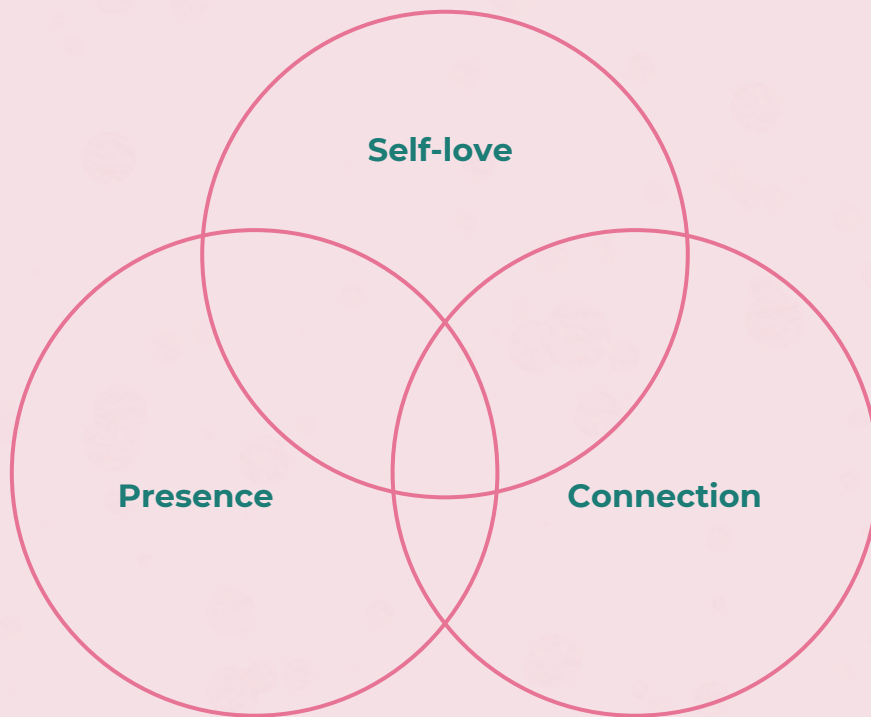




What do you think it takes to be more self-compassionate?

Handwriting lines for the response.

The Three Elements of Self-Compassion





How would you describe self-love?

Do you think embracing self-love can help you navigate challenges more smoothly?





1) Self-Love.

Guilt is a common emotion that comes up when we think we caused harm in this world. It may cause us to wonder what we might have done wrong or if there was something we could have done to prevent it from happening. Consequently, we are more likely to beat ourselves up rather than put a supportive arm around our own shoulder. Self-kindness is what counters this tendency: it makes us care for ourselves, just as we would care about others. Rather than being harshly critical during these difficult times, we should be supportive and encouraging and aim to protect ourselves from harm. And instead of blaming ourselves, we should offer ourselves warmth and unconditional acceptance.

What does it truly mean to feel deeply connected to yourself?

How connected do you feel to yourself today?





2) Connection.

A sense of interconnectedness is central to self-compassion. It's recognizing that life itself is unpredictable, that everyone fails, makes mistakes, and experiences hardship in life. Self-compassion honours the unavoidable fact that life entails pain and suffering for everyone without exception. While this may seem obvious, it's so easy to forget.

Do you offer yourself kindness when facing challenges, failures or hardships?

How do you navigate and process feelings of regrets?





Additional notes about Connection

When we lose sight of our interconnectedness, we feel isolated and alone in our suffering. But when we remember that pain is part of the shared human experience, every moment of suffering is transformed into a moment of connection with others. The pain I feel in difficult times is the same pain you feel in difficult times. Even though the circumstances or the degree of pain may be different, the basic experience of human suffering is the same.

Who do you reach out to for support when you are in pain and what makes them your safe space?

What do you believe is the most powerful way to heal the pain you carry within?





3) Presence.

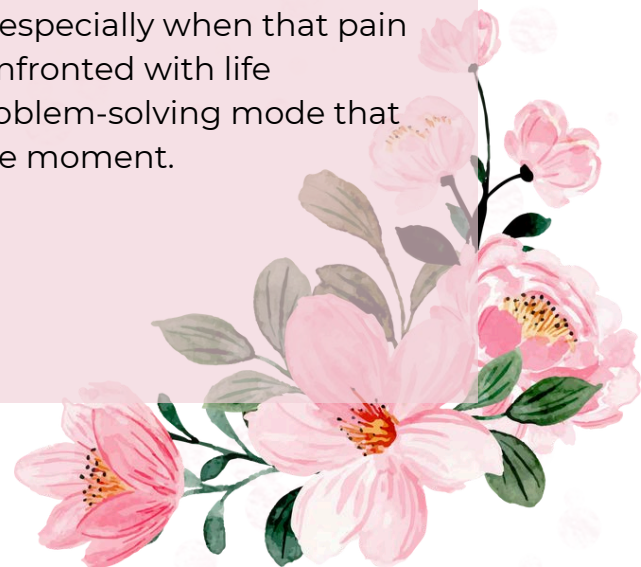
Mindfulness involves being fully aware of every moment's experience in a clear and balanced manner. It means being open to the reality of the present moment, allowing all thoughts, emotions, and sensations to enter awareness without resistance or avoidance.

How often do you practice mindfulness and what is your favourite method?

Why we believe mindfulness is an essential component of self-compassion.

Because we need to be able to turn inward and acknowledge when we are suffering, we need to “be” with our pain long enough to respond with care and kindness. Have you ever been trying to get rid of the people you love as fast as possible? Why would it be any different with your feelings?

While it might seem that suffering is blindingly obvious, many people don't acknowledge how much pain they are in, especially when that pain stems from their own self-criticism. Or when confronted with life challenges, people often get so caught up in problem-solving mode that they don't pause to consider how hard it is in the moment.





Mindfulness counters the tendency to avoid painful thoughts and emotions, allowing us to face the truth of our experience, even when it's unpleasant. At the same time, mindfulness prevents us from becoming absorbed by, and "overidentified" with negative thoughts or feelings, from getting caught up and swept away by our aversive reactions.

To be self-compassionate, mindfulness is the first step we need to take—we need presence of mind to respond in a new way.

What thoughts, beliefs or expectations sometimes make it difficult for you to practice self-compassion?

Are the people around you most likely to try to fix you or to kindly accept your feelings as they are?





What Self-Compassion Is Not

Some social cultures don't promote self-compassion as a virtue, and many people dishonour the practice of being kind to themselves. There are many misconceptions about self-compassion. Let us look at some of them.

Another big fear is that self-compassion will make us weak and vulnerable. In fact, self-compassion is a reliable source of inner strength that confers courage and enhances resilience when we are faced with difficulties. Self-compassion is showing up for yourself, being loyal to you, and embracing your divinity and humanity.

How do you respond to yourself when you fall short of others' expectations?

You cannot pour from an empty cup.

Some worry that by being self-compassionate rather than just focusing on being compassionate to others, they will become self-centred or selfish. However, giving compassion to ourselves enables us to give more to others, especially as you cannot give others what you don't have. If your emotional and mental cup is empty, there is no way anyone else can share from it.





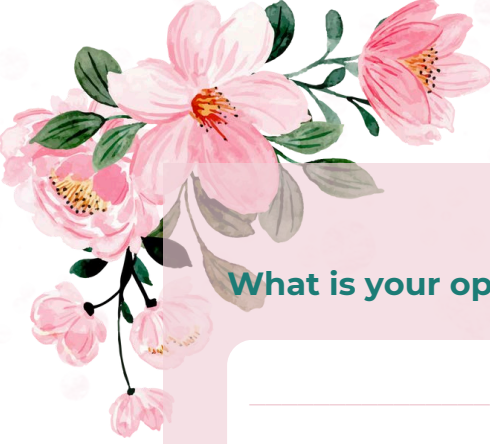
How do you recharge and do you give yourself permission to do so when you need it?

Do you think it is selfish to take care of yourself first?

Why you shouldn't feel guilty about putting yourself first

Although many people fear that being self-compassionate is the same as being self-indulgent, it's just the opposite. Compassion inclines us toward long-term health and well-being, not short-term pleasure. Self-compassion encourages people to engage in healthier behaviours like eating well, sleeping well, and taking care of their mental, spiritual, emotional and physical needs.





What is your opinion about yourself?

Additional notes on Self-compassion.

Self-compassion is not about worrying about what others think. Self-compassion provides the courage required to admit mistakes rather than needing to blame someone else for them or spend time worrying about what others think.

Self-compassion isn't about making excuses and not taking responsibility.

Focusing on negative thoughts leads to decreased motivation and feelings of helplessness. Self-criticism tends to undermine self-confidence, leading to fear of failure. If we are self-compassionate, we will still be motivated to reach our goals—not because we are inadequate as we are, but because we care about ourselves and want to reach our full potential.

Self-compassion is different from self-esteem. Although they are both strongly linked to psychological well-being, they diverge in significant ways:





- » While self-esteem is a positive evaluation of self-worth, self-compassion on the other hand, isn't a judgement or an evaluation at all. Instead, self-compassion is a way of relating to the ever-changing landscape of who we are with kindness and self-acceptance.
- » While self-esteem requires feeling better than others, self-compassion on the other hand, requires acknowledging that we are all imperfect.
- » Compared to self-esteem, self-compassion is less contingent on conditions like physical attractiveness or successful performance and provides a more stable sense of self-worth over time. It is also linked to less social comparison and narcissism than self-esteem is.

Have you experienced self-compassion before? What benefits did you get from it?





The Benefits of Self-Compassion

People who are more self-compassionate experience greater well-being:

Less	More
Depression	Happiness
Anxiety	Life satisfaction
Stress	Self-confidence
Shame	Physical health

Most of these benefits were tied directly to learning to be more self-compassionate and self-aware.

Did you know?

There is a reason behind every emotion you feel.

Fear, for example, isn't trying to paralyze or weigh you down: it's signalling potential danger or a lack of information that could lead to a negative situation. It's trying to prepare you for the worst case scenario. Not prevent you from taking action.





Below is a table outlining the purpose of the four main emotions:

Emotion	Purpose	When it happens	How to use it
Fear	Protection	In presence of danger or in lack of information.	Initially designed for us to avoid danger by running, it now pushes us to gather as much information as possible about what is coming. It still takes the courage to explore what is beyond the unknown in order to grow and thrive.
Anger	Defense and affirmation	In a moment of disrespect or when under attack.	Anger is a message that says: "I won't take this". When someone disrespects you or your values, it rises so you are ready to defend yourself. It also rises when someone attacks you and allows you to counter-attack.
Sadness	Grief	In moments of loss.	Sadness happens when we think we lose something. It represents the release of the old situation to the benefit of the new one.
Joy	Natural state.	When all other emotions are released and in moments of connection.	Joyful is how we were naturally wired to feel. When nothing else is happening to us, we are supposed to feel this emotion. It also happens when we are deeply connected to ourselves or someone around us.





What emotional experience are you going through right now, and what message is your emotion trying to communicate to you?





Part 2: Practice ideas





Keeping a Self-Compassion Journal

Try writing a self-compassion journal every day for one week (or longer if you like). Journaling is an effective way to express emotions and has been found to enhance both mental and physical well-being.

At some point during the evening, when you have a few quiet moments, review the day's events.

In your journal, write down anything that you felt bad about, anything you judged yourself for, or any difficult experience that caused you pain. For each difficult event that happened during the day, try using mindfulness, a sense of common humanity, and kindness, to relate to the event in a more self-compassionate way. Here's how:

Presence

This will mainly involve bringing balanced awareness to the painful emotions that arose due to your self-judgment or difficult circumstances. Write about how you felt: sad, ashamed, frightened, stressed, and so on. As you write, try to be accepting and non-judgmental of your experience, without diminishing it or becoming overly dramatic.

Connection

Write down the ways in which your experience was part of being human. This might include acknowledging that being human means being imperfect and that all people have these sorts of painful experiences. ("Everyone overreacts sometimes—it's only human." "This is how people are likely to feel in a situation like that.") You might also want to think about the unique causes and conditions underlying your painful event.





Self-Love

Write yourself using some kind, understanding words, just as you might write to a good friend. In a gentle and reassuring tone, let yourself know that you care about your happiness and well-being.

("It's okay. You did your best with what you knew. What behaviour do you want to adopt the next time you experience a similar situation?")

Presence

Mindfulness is the foundation of self-compassion. We need to step outside of our narrative of our suffering and turn toward our pain mindfully, to be able to respond with kindness. Mindfulness can be defined as "Stillness, movement, and awareness. It is being aware of the present-moment experience with acceptance."

In many ways, mindfulness is a simple skill because it just requires noticing what's happening while it's happening, using all five senses. For instance, take a moment to try focusing on what comes through the door of each of your senses, one by one.

Hearing: Close your eyes and take a moment to listen to the sounds in the environment. As you listen, allow the sounds to come to you. Notice what you hear, one sound after another, with an inner nod of recognition. There is no need to name what you hear.

Sight: Rather than looking at one object, create a diffused view like a soft lens of a camera by looking at the wider scene of what's in front of you. Again, note whatever you see, one visual impression after the other.

Touch: Notice the sensation of touch where your body meets the chair or your feet touch the floor.





Smell: Put your hand up to your nose and notice any scents arising from your skin.

Taste: Notice if there are any tastes in your mouth right now, perhaps lingering from the last thing you ate or drank.

Mindfulness gives us mental space and with mental space comes the freedom to choose how we might like to respond to a situation. Mindfulness is especially important for self-compassion. When we suffer, mindfulness opens the door to compassion. Hence the need to practice self-compassion.

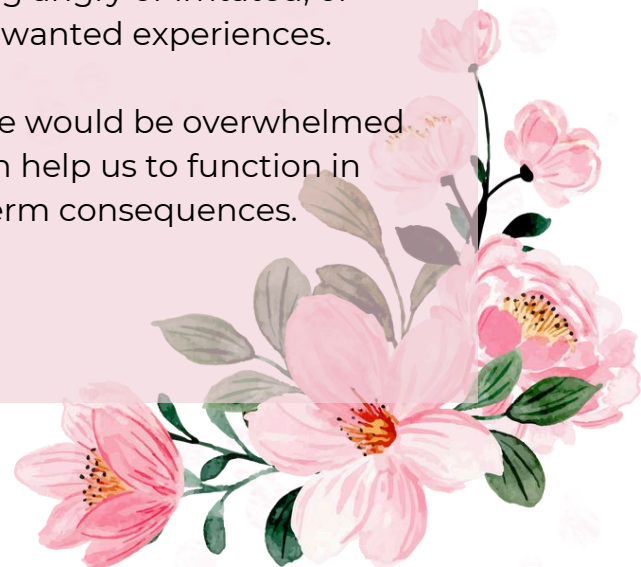
Letting Go of Resistance

Mindfulness doesn't just involve paying attention to what's happening in the present moment. It also involves a certain quality of attention—accepting what's happening, without being lost in judgments of good or bad. This attitude is often described as non-resistance. Resistance refers to the struggle that occurs when we believe our moment-to-moment experience should be other than it is.

Acceptance means that even though we may not like what's happening, we acknowledge that it is happening and can let go of the fact that things aren't exactly the way we want them to be.

How do we know when we are resisting? Some signs associated with resistance include being distracted, physically tense, getting lost in worry or rumination, overworking or overeating, feeling angry or irritated, or numbing out. These are ways we try to resist unwanted experiences.

However, resistance isn't all bad, as without it we would be overwhelmed by the intensity of our lives. While resistance can help us to function in the short term, it can also have negative long-term consequences.





What we resist persists.

Unfortunately, when we resist unpleasant experiences, they don't typically go away; instead, they just get worse. When we fight our difficult feelings, we just add fuel to their fire. Pain in life, whether loss, worry, heartbreak, or hardship, is inevitable. And when we try to resist the pain, it usually just makes the pain more intense. It's this add-on pain that can be equated with suffering. We suffer not only because it's painful in the moment, but because we bang our head against the wall of reality—getting frustrated because we think things should be different from what they are.

Another common form of resistance is denial. We hope that if we don't think about a problem or by ignoring it, it will go away. When we try to suppress our unwanted thoughts or feelings, however, they just get stronger. Moreover, when we avoid or suppress painful thoughts and emotions, we can't see them clearly and respond with compassion.

Also, focusing on your pain is also a form of resistance. It is important to acknowledge your pain and then redirect your thoughts into something more constructive. For example, when you had a hard time in a relationship, you start with acknowledging what decision you made (or didn't make) that allowed this situation to unfold. Then you ask yourself what decision you want to experiment with next time. Ultimately you allow these thoughts to be gone and you trust yourself to remember that new decision when the time comes.

What we can feel we can heal.

Mindfulness and self-compassion are resources that give us the safety needed to encounter difficulty with less resistance. Just imagine how you would feel if you were overwhelmed, and a friend walked into the room, gave you a hug, sat down beside you, listened to your distress, and then helped you work out a plan of action. Thankfully, that mindful and compassionate friend can be you. It begins by opening to what is, without resistance





Mindfulness is a core component of self-compassion

- While mindfulness focuses primarily on acceptance of experience, self-compassion focuses more on caring for the victim.
- Mindfulness asks, “What am I experiencing right now?” On the other hand, self-compassion asks, “What do I need right now?”
- Mindfulness says, “Feel your suffering with spacious awareness.” While self-compassion says, “Be kind to yourself in all situations.”

Despite the differences, both mindfulness and self-compassion allow us to live with less resistance toward ourselves and our lives.





Self-Compassion and Our Bodies

We struggle to feel good enough in many areas of our lives, especially in our bodies. Our sense of self is closely identified with the body, so our physical appearance has a large impact on how we feel about ourselves. Body image may be particularly important for women because the standards of female beauty are so high. Increasingly, women may feel less attractive after childbirth or experienced trauma during birth, and this has had an impact physically.

Self-compassion offers a powerful antidote to body dissatisfaction. A brief period of practicing self-compassion can help us feel less body shame, reduce the degree to which our feelings of self-worth are contingent on physical appearance, and help us appreciate our bodies as they are.

When we treat ourselves with kindness, warmth, and acceptance—even when the image we see in the mirror isn't perfect—we realize that we are so much more than this image. Instead of identifying with the body as the definition of who we are, we can see the bigger picture, realizing that our inner resources are most important. We can appreciate the amazing gift of life our body provides us, feeling our aliveness deep within our being. With self-compassion, we can celebrate our bodies for what they still do for us, rather than how they merely look.

Embrace Difficult Emotion

Life isn't easy. It often brings challenging situations and with them, difficult emotions such as anger, fear, worry, and grief. By a certain age, we learn that it doesn't help to run from our problems—we need to deal with them directly.





However, when we turn toward difficult emotions, even with mindfulness and self-compassion, our pain often increases at first and our instinct is to turn away. But if we are to heal, the only way out is to face them. We must have the courage to be present with emotional pain if we are going to live healthy, authentic lives.

Experiencing discomfort is a prerequisite for self-compassion, but we only need to touch emotional pain to cultivate compassion, and we can go slowly so we don't overwhelm ourselves. The art of self-compassion includes inclining gradually toward emotional discomfort when it arises.

There are five stages of acceptance when meeting difficult emotions, and each successive stage corresponds to a gradual release of emotional resistance.

- **Resisting:** struggling against what comes—"Go away!"
- **Exploring:** turning toward discomfort with curiosity—"What am I feeling?"
- **Tolerating:** safely enduring, holding steady—"I don't like this, but I can stand it."
- **Allowing:** letting feelings come and go—"It's okay, I can make space for this."
- **Befriending:** seeing value in difficult emotional experiences—"What can I learn from this?"






Glass Half full


By the time most people reach midlife, they become caregivers in one form or another. Some might be caregivers in their professional careers—doctors, nurses, therapists, social workers, teachers—and others in their personal lives, caring for children, elderly parents, spouses, friends, and so on.

When we care for others who are suffering, the process of empathic resonance means that we feel their distress as our own. When we witness someone else in pain, the pain centres of our own brains become active. Empathic distress can be hard to bear, so it's natural to try to block it out or make it go away as we would do to any other pain, but the constant struggle can be draining and may lead to caregiver fatigue and burnout.

How do we know we've reached the point of burnout? Usually, there are signs such as being distracted, angry or irritated, restless or avoidant of others, having trouble sleeping, or experiencing distressing and intrusive thoughts. However, caregiver fatigue is not a sign of weakness, but a sign of caring. In fact, the more caregivers are capable of empathic resonance, the more vulnerable they may be to caregiver fatigue. Human beings are limited in how much vicarious suffering they can take on without becoming overwhelmed.

There are two main types of advice given to prevent caregiver burnout. One is to draw clear emotional boundaries between ourselves and those we care for. The problem with this approach, however, is that if you are a professional caregiver, emotional sensitivity is necessary to do an effective job, and if you are caring for a loved one (say a child or a parent) the drawing of boundaries can harm the quality of the relationship.





The other type of advice given to prevent burnout is to engage in self-care activities. These are typically behaviours like exercising, eating well, spending time with friends, or going on vacation. While self-care is extremely important, there is a big limitation in the use of self-care strategies to deal with caregiver burnout. Self-care tends to happen off the job and doesn't help us during caregiving interactions themselves.

As we are told whenever we fly, that when there is a drop in cabin pressure, we need to put on our own oxygen mask first before we help others. Some caregivers may believe they should only be concerned with the needs of others and are often self-critical because they think they aren't giving enough. However, if you don't meet your own emotional needs by giving yourself compassion, you will become depleted and less able to give.

Importantly, when you calm and soothe your own mind, the person you are caring for will also feel calmed and soothed through her own empathetic resonance. In other words, when we cultivate peace within, we help all those we are in contact with to become more peaceful as well.

Self-compassion helps caregivers to thrive in their caregiving roles.





May I forgive myself for my shortcomings.

May I be strong.

Reassured or Dismissed.

I am not the only person who feels this way, and I won't be the last. I'm not in this alone.

I accept my flaws because no one is perfect.

I am kind to myself no matter what.

May I have peace.

May I be safe.

I am strong.

I deserve compassion and empathy for and from myself.

I have forgiveness for today and self-love for whatever happens tomorrow.

May I learn to accept myself as I am.

May I be gentle with myself.

I am not hard on myself but accepting of situations and my reactions to them.

I accept the best and worst aspects of myself.

I love myself.

It's safe to show kindness to myself.

Self-doubt and self-judgment will not hold me back from my future.





What else could we do for you?

Please visit <https://www.mayahslegacy.com/> for further educational content, ways to know yourself and personal growth in a nurturing way.

Find all the resources you need as well as a community of people who want your good and want to help you realize how amazing and wonderful you are despite all the challenges you might be facing.

It doesn't matter how unworthy the world made you feel before: you deserve all the best this life has to offer.



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