

SELF-COMPASSION

Having compassion for oneself is no different than having compassion for others. Think about what the experience of compassion feels like. You have likely offered kindness and compassion for others when they are going through a difficult time, or you know how it feels when others show you compassion. Self-compassion involves acting the same way towards yourself when you are having a difficult time. Instead of just ignoring your pain with a “stiff upper lip”, stop to tell yourself: “This is difficult right now, how can I comfort and care for myself in this moment?”

Self-Compassion is:

- **Taking responsibility in our lives.** If we make a mistake, self-compassion is recognizing that mistakes are just that – mistakes. We can look at what we can do better next time without putting ourselves down. This creates learning from experiences rather than from failures.
- **Motivating.** Believe it or not, when we are kind to ourselves, we are much more likely to try again or try something new. If we put ourselves down for making a mistake or not knowing something, we are less likely to try next time.

Self-Compassion is not:

- **Self-pity.** When individuals feel self-pity, they become immersed in their own problems and forget that others have similar problems. They ignore their connections with others, and instead feel that they are the only ones in the world who are suffering. Self-compassion, on the other hand, allows one to see the related experiences of others without feelings of isolation and disconnection. You are not alone!
- **Self-indulgence.** Many people say they are reluctant to be self-compassionate because they are afraid, they would let themselves get away with anything. “I’m stressed out today, so to be kind to myself I’ll just watch TV all day and eat a quart of ice cream.” Remember that being compassionate to oneself means that you want to be happy and healthy in the long-term.

Some ways to practice Self-Compassion.

- **Write a letter to yourself from the perspective of an unconditionally loving friend.** Think about something that you are struggling with. Then think about how you would support a friend including what you would say to them. Then write down what you would say, but from the perspective of a friend saying it to you.
- **Change harsh self-talk to compassionate self-talk.** Whenever you’re feeling bad about something, think about what you’ve just said to yourself. It was probably harsh and untrue. For example, you might say “I am such a terrible dad for yelling at my kids, I don’t deserve them.” You can change this to compassionate talk such as “I really love my kids, so it hurts that I yelled at them the way I did. I am going to put more effort into being calmer with them.”
- **Self-Compassion Journal.** Write yourself some kind and understanding words of comfort. Let yourself know that you care about yourself by adopting a gentle and reassuring tone. You could also write the things you are grateful for (including what you are grateful for about you) in this journal.

FCSS offers workshops as well as individual counselling to help you learn more.

For more information call 587-370-3728
or email counsellingservices@fcss.ca.

Visit www.fcss.ca for more information.

Submitted by:
Trevor Gilbert
FCSS Counsellor

