

Self-Compassion Practice

Soften, Soothe, and Allow Dr. Kristin Neff

Allowing yourself to find a comfortable position, close your eyes and take three relaxing breaths. Place your hand on your heart for a few moments to remind yourself that you are in the room, and to bring kindness to yourself.

Labeling Emotions

When you find yourself in a stressful situation, see if you can begin by labeling the emotions that are present. Is there anger? Sadness? Fear? Shame? It's likely that more than one emotion might be here, such as shame and disgust, or sadness that is masked by anger. Labeling our emotions gives us a little distance from them. When we can see them for what they are, we're less likely to be carried away with them, and recognize them as familiar visitors.

Mindfulness of Emotion in the Body

Where do you feel emotions in your body? Try to choose a single spot where that emotion is felt most keenly, such as the pit of the stomach, the chest, or in the face and jaw. When we can locate the emotion, we can begin to direct our attention toward it in a kind and caring way, just as we would show care to a child or pet.

Soften-Soothe-Allow

Begin by **softening** into the part of the body where emotions feel strongest. Breathe into that place and gently invite it to relax on the exhaled breath. You might repeat the word "soften" to that spot. Be careful not to struggle – we're not trying to make the feelings go away, but to offer kind attention to them.

Then offer **soothing** to that place in you that's suffering. Gently place your hand on your heart, or on that place in your body where you're feeling strong emotion. Perhaps offer words of comfort: "It's so painful there, I'm sorry that you're suffering. I care about you."

Finally, see if it's possible to offer this suffering place some space, and just **allow** it to be there. You might say, "It's ok for you to be here; I will stay with you." See if you can offer acceptance, to this suffering and yourself, in this moment.