

Self-Compassion Journal by Kristin Neff

Try keeping a daily self-compassion journal 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 instance, perhaps you got angry at a waitress at lunch because she took forever to bring the check. You made a rude comment and stormed off without leaving a tip. Afterwards, you felt ashamed and embarrassed.) For each event, use mindfulness, a sense of common humanity, and kindness to process the event in a more self-compassionate way.

Mindfulness

This will mainly involve bring 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, not belittling it nor making it overly dramatic. (For example, "I was frustrated because she was being so slow. I got angry, over-reacted, and felt foolish afterwards.")

Common Humanity

Write down the ways in which your experience was connected to the larger human experience. This might include acknowledging that being human means being imperfect, and that all people have these sorts of painful experiences. ("Everyone over-reacts sometimes, it's only human.") You might also want to think about the various causes and conditions underlying the painful event. ("My frustration was exacerbated by the fact that I was late for my doctor's appointment across town and there was a lot of traffic that day. If the circumstances had been different my reaction probably would have been different.")

Self-Kindness

Write yourself some kind, understanding, words of comfort. Let yourself know that you care about yourself, adopting a gentle, reassuring tone. (It's okay. You messed up but it wasn't the end of the world. I understand how frustrated you were and you just lost it. Maybe you can try being extra patient and generous to any wait-staff this week...")

Practicing the three components of self-compassion with this writing exercise will help organize your thoughts and emotions, while helping to encode them in your memory. If you keep a journal regularly, your self-compassion practice will become even stronger and translate more easily into daily life.