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URSINUS COLLEGE

WEEKLY WELLNESS AND COUNSELING
NEWSLETTER



“A moment of self-compassion can change your entire day. A string of such moments can change the course of your life”

Christopher Germer

Self-Compassion: What does that mean?

THE ETYMOLOGY FOR COMPASSION IN LATIN IS "CO-SUFFERING", COMPASSION INVOLVES FEELING FOR ANOTHER AND OFFERING KINDNESS, UNDERSTANDING, AND SOLACE.

WHEN THIS OCCURS, YOU FEEL WARMTH, CARING, AND THE DESIRE TO BE KIND. HAVING COMPASSION ALSO MEANS THAT YOU OFFER UNDERSTANDING AND KINDNESS TO OTHERS WHEN THEY STRUGGLE, RATHER THAN HARSH JUDGMENT OR PITY. HAVING COMPASSION FOR ONESELF IS REALLY NO DIFFERENT THAN HAVING COMPASSION FOR OTHERS.





Three Elements of Self-Compassion

DR. KRISTEN NEFF

1. Self-kindness vs. Self-judgment.

Self-compassion entails being warm and understanding toward ourselves when we suffer, fail, or feel inadequate, rather than ignoring our pain or filling ourselves with self-criticism.

Self-compassionate people recognize that being imperfect, failing, and experiencing life difficulties is inevitable, so they tend to be gentle with themselves when confronted with painful experiences rather than getting highly self-critical when one falls short of set ideals.

2. Common humanity vs. Isolation.

Frustration at not having things exactly as we want is often accompanied by an irrational but pervasive sense of isolation – as if “I” were the only person suffering or making mistakes.

All humans suffer, however. The very definition of being “human” means that one is mortal, vulnerable and imperfect. Therefore, self-compassion involves recognizing that suffering and personal inadequacy is part of the shared human experience – something that we all go through rather than being something that happens to “me” alone.

3. Mindfulness vs. Over-identification

Self-compassion also requires taking a balanced approach to our negative emotions so that feelings are neither suppressed nor exaggerated.

This equilibrated stance stems from the process of relating personal experiences to those of others who are also suffering. It also stems from the willingness to observe our negative thoughts and emotions with openness and clarity, so that they are held in mindful awareness.

Mindfulness is a non-judgmental, receptive mind state in which one observes thoughts and feelings as they are, without trying to suppress or deny them.



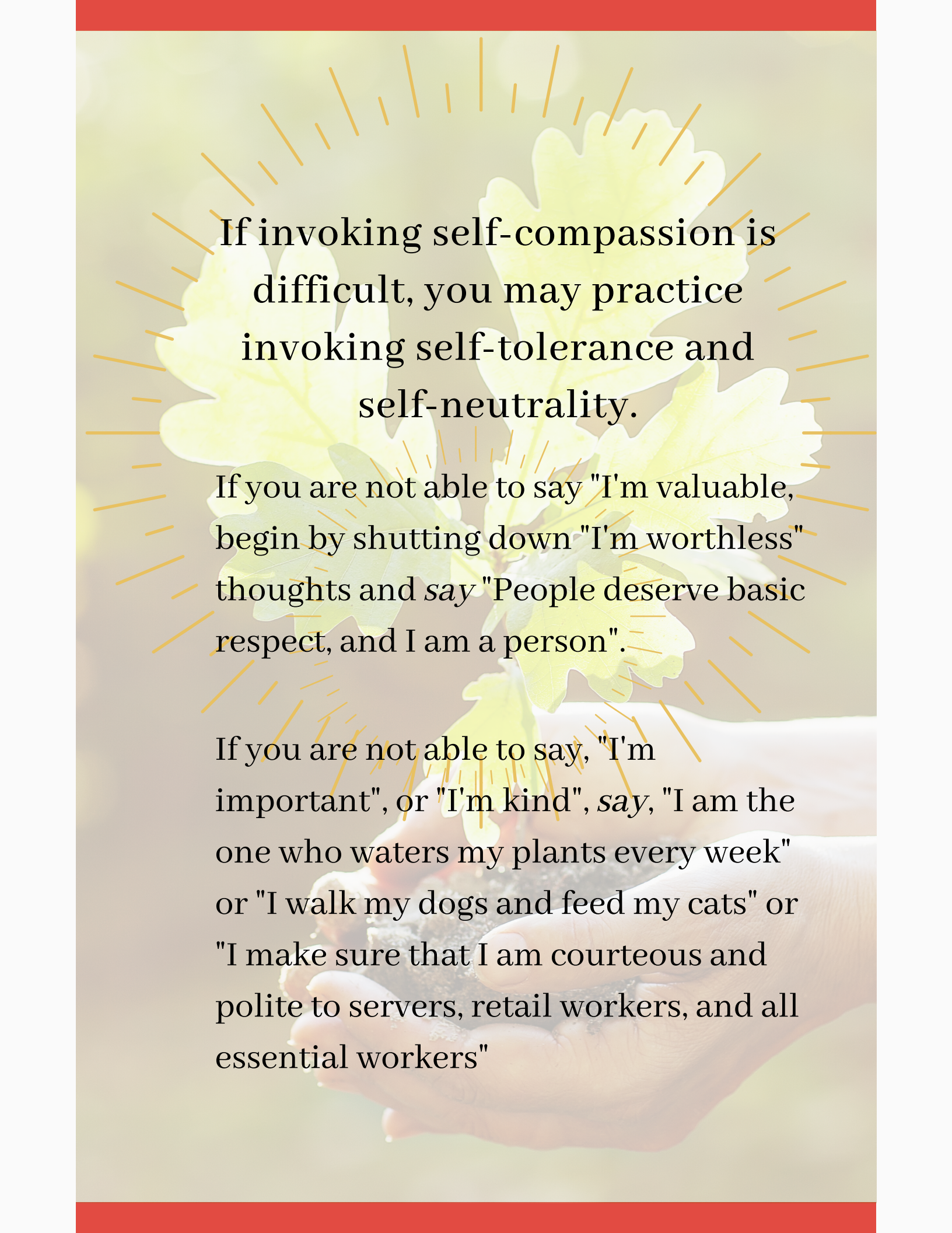
WHAT SELF-COMPASSION IS NOT

Self-Compassion is not self-pity

When individuals feel self-pity, they become immersed in feelings of sadness, shame, and guilt, without feeling connection with others. Self-compassion, on the other hand, allows one to see the related experiences of self and other without these feelings of isolation and disconnection. By taking the perspective of a compassionate other towards oneself, “mental space” is provided to recognize the broader human context of one’s experience and to put things in greater perspective.

Self-Compassion is not self-indulgence or avoidance

Many may say that they do not want self-compassion for fear of engaging in self-indulgence and avoidance. Self-compassion is akin to allowing the self to take breaks and tune out from work, with the awareness that one will return to work and school and will prioritize what is important (taking breaks is important).

A hand is shown holding a small amount of dark soil. Above the hand, a bright sunburst effect is visible, with rays emanating from a central point. The background is a soft, out-of-focus image of a plant with large, light-colored leaves. The overall tone is warm and positive.

If invoking self-compassion is difficult, you may practice invoking self-tolerance and self-neutrality.

If you are not able to say "I'm valuable, begin by shutting down "I'm worthless" thoughts and say "People deserve basic respect, and I am a person".

If you are not able to say, "I'm important", or "I'm kind", say, "I am the one who waters my plants every week" or "I walk my dogs and feed my cats" or "I make sure that I am courteous and polite to servers, retail workers, and all essential workers"

Self-Compassion Exercise: How would you treat a friend?

PLEASE TAKE OUT A SHEET OF PAPER AND ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

1. First, think about times when a close friend feels really bad about themselves or is really struggling in some way. How would you respond to your friend in this situation (especially when you're at your best)? Please write down what you typically do, what you say, and note the tone in which you typically talk to your friends.
2. Now think about times when you feel bad about yourself or are struggling. How do you typically respond to yourself in these situations? Please write down what you typically do, what you say, and note the tone in which you talk to yourself.
3. Did you notice a difference? If so, ask yourself why. What factors or fears come into play that lead you to treat yourself and others so differently?
4. Please write down how you think things might change if you responded to yourself in the same way you typically respond to a close friend when you're suffering.

WHY NOT TRY TREATING YOURSELF LIKE A GOOD FRIEND AND SEE WHAT HAPPENS?

*Self-compassion
is simply giving
the same
kindness to
ourselves that
we would give
others.*

Christopher Germer



Self-Compassion

All-in-one resource for self-compassion. Official website for Dr. self-compassion.org