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PSYCHOTHERAPY & COACHING

SELF-COMPASSION as a Healing Tool



Acronyms are a fan favorite in the world of psychotherapy. I have come up with a breakdown for the word - COMPASSION in hopes that it can help you apply these principles to YOURSELF.

Compassion is a vital ingredient in therapeutic work.

If you have anything to heal, work through or resolve within yourself emotionally, then you will need the tool of self-compassion!

C - Connection (with self and others)
O - Optimism (in words, thoughts, and hope)
M - Mindfulness
P - Practice
A - Affirmation
S - Support
S - Sensing
I - Imagination
O - Openness
N - Nurturing Behaviors, Words, Thoughts

We as humans have a desire to be SEEN, HEARD, UNDERSTOOD and ACCEPTED.

In order to heal, we must receive these 4 components. We must also learn to be able to give these things to ourselves, since external support may not always be available or accessible.



Step 1 - Identify the situation that is causing emotional discomfort ...

Step 2 - Explore the below practices ...

C - CONNECTION

Healing takes place in relationships. Connection provides feedback, safety, and support. Connection can be experienced with others, or with yourself. The way you connect to yourself can vary.

You can place your hand on your heart to feel your heartbeat.

You can sit in silence and meditation.

You can clasp your hands or put them in prayer position to feel the connection of your palms. Mirror work can also be a powerful way to connect to yourself. Take a look at yourself in the mirror and make eye contact. What do you notice? What are the eyes looking back at you trying to communicate?

Notice what wisdom comes up for you when you are staying in a mindful connection with yourself.

O - OPTIMISM

Maintaining an attitude and mindset of optimism can create change in your mental structure. Neurons that fire together wire together. What that means is that when you have repetitive thoughts, the repetition strengthens the association in your brain and makes the thought more easily accessible and more likely to occur. Wouldn't it be nice to be able to access optimism more? See if you can list 10 optimistic outcomes or statements that relate to your concern. What would you tell a loved one about this matter?

M - MINDFULNESS

Practicing mindfulness can be similar to a "reset" on your nervous system. See if you can become mindful of your breathing. Count to 5 for an inhale and 5 for an exhale. Then see if you can extend to a count of 6, 7, 8, 9, etc. Being mindful of your breath can lower your heartrate, increase concentration, and aid in making good decisions. We so often rush through life. We are chaotic in our thoughts, words, actions, etc. See if you can set a timer for 5 minutes and NOT DO ANYTHING. Sit, lay down, get comfy, listen to a song. Just BE! This action of a pause can provide a lot of space and clarity for compassion to creep in.

P - PRACTICE

Ease up on your self-criticism and practice some of these steps. We so often have unrealistic expectations of ourselves or unrealistic expectation of outcomes. See if you can commit to one of these practices, and do just that - practice the skill. Self-compassion is a learned skill, and often overlooked in importance.

A - AFFIRMATION WORK

Affirmations can be very grounding and invigorating. See if you can create 5-10 statements of empowerment, kindness or compassion. Make them feel realistic to you (a stretch in comfort, but realistic). If that is a challenge, recall what a support person has said to you in the past. Repeat these statements for 2-3 minutes.

If you really can't think of any on your own, try some of these examples:

I am supported. I support myself. I am hopeful of a positive outcome. I am practicing kindness with myself. I am expecting a miracle. I am open to guidance and support. I am loving. I am open. I am practicing patience. I am seeking a sign. I am maintaining optimism. I am resilient. I am hopeful. I trust I can handle whatever comes my way. I am trying my best.

S - SUPPORT

We must learn to be supportive of ourselves, the way we would with a loved one. Notice what thoughts and beliefs you have around receiving support. What mental blocks come up for you? Is it pride, ego, were you taught to not need help? See if you can challenge yourself a small amount and ask for support in some way. Let yourself receive it!

S - SENSING

Notice what you can physically sense in the present moment. Whether emotionally or physically, see if you can list off 5-10 things you notice. For example: sensing anxiety in your chest, sensing the chair underneath your bottom, sensing your feet on the ground. Focusing on sensations is another way to orient yourself, ground, and be present in the moment. This can create opportunity for gentleness and attunement.

I - IMAGINATION

Creating a shift in our emotional state often requires imagination. Sometimes thinking your way into an emotion can be helpful. Identify how you want to be feeling. Identify how you would encourage someone who was suffering. Think about all the creative possibilities that would evoke the desired feeling within. Our brains can be tricked! If you think about a situation for long enough, or with great enough detail, your brain starts to respond as though it were actually happening.

O - OPENNESS

Be open to possibilities and profound change. Practice having an open mind, open heart and open arms to receive support. If you are going through the motions but don't believe that change is possible, that will only make things more difficult.

N - NURTURING BEHAVIORS, WORDS, THOUGHTS

When all else fails, practice nurturing behaviors, words and thoughts. If a loved one was hurting, you certainly wouldn't berate them with criticism or judgment, so why are you doing that to yourself? Don't even bother answering that question, just stop doing it and trust me on this one.

Nurturing words, behaviors and thoughts HEAL. Compassion is an extension of nurture. We all need nurture, and a lot of us didn't get it as a child. It is time to give it to yourself now. Identify 5-10 behaviors, words and thoughts of nurture and start applying them to yourself! Example: Asking for a hug, rubbing your shoulders, going for a walk, taking a nap, being out in nature, practicing affirmations, prayer, etc.

I hope some of these tips help you evoke a sense of compassion for yourself.

Notice that I say PRACTICE throughout the worksheet. This is not a perfect science. These skills have to be practiced and approached with trial and error.

As always, seek the support of a mental health professional for additional support and guidance. We are not meant to do this alone.

Xo,
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