

# Practising Self-Compassion

Recovery can be uncomfortable. Self-compassion is not giving up or avoiding change; it is learning to respond to difficulty without adding punishment, shame or harsh self-criticism.

## Why kindness matters in eating-disorder recovery

Eating disorders can become closely linked with perfectionism, rules, guilt, comparison and a powerful internal critic. When recovery feels difficult, that critical voice may become even louder. It can tell you that you should be coping better, progressing faster or getting everything 'right'.

Self-compassion offers another response: recognising that something is difficult, noticing what you need and choosing a response that supports recovery rather than increasing distress.

*Being kinder to yourself does not mean pretending everything is fine. It means making room for honesty without turning that honesty into punishment.*

### What am I being hard on myself about?

Describe what has happened without judging yourself for it.

### What words am I using towards myself?

Write down the critical phrases or expectations you notice.

### Would I speak this way to someone I cared about?

If not, what would be different?

# What Is Underneath the Criticism?

Harsh self-talk often appears to be motivating, but it can also increase shame, anxiety and the urge to retreat into familiar eating-disorder behaviours. Exploring what sits underneath criticism can help you respond to the actual difficulty.

**What has been difficult about this situation?**

Food, body image, a meal, comparison, a change in routine, recovery expectations or something else.

**What feeling is underneath my criticism?**

Fear, shame, sadness, anger, uncertainty, grief, overwhelm or another feeling.

**What is the eating disorder telling me I 'should' have done?**

Notice the rules and demands without automatically accepting them as facts.

**What might I need rather than criticism?**

Support, rest, reassurance, nourishment, information, space, grounding or connection.

**What would a fairer interpretation of this situation be?**

Include context, effort and what you were coping with.

**What am I doing that deserves recognition?**

Include small recovery actions, honesty, persistence and asking for help.

# Changing the Way I Speak to Myself

A kinder response does not have to sound overly positive. If 'everything is wonderful' feels unbelievable, aim for language that is balanced, respectful and supportive.

**What would I say to somebody I cared about in this situation?**

Write it as naturally as you would say it to them.

**How could I say the same thing to myself?**

Keep the meaning, even if the words need to feel more neutral.

**A kinder sentence I can practise is...**

For example: 'This is difficult, and I can take the next step without punishing myself.'

**What would supportive action look like?**

Self-compassion can be practical: eating, resting, contacting someone, reducing checking or using a coping tool.

**What does NOT help me feel supported?**

Identify responses that increase shame, pressure or eating-disorder thoughts.

**How can someone else help me practise this?**

What could they say or do when your inner critic becomes loud?

# Using Compassion in Difficult Moments

Food, eating and body-image distress can trigger immediate self-judgement. Having a prepared response can help create a small pause between the thought and what you do next.

**After a difficult meal, what does my critical voice say?**

Notice the thought rather than arguing with it immediately.

**What would a recovery-supportive response sound like?**

What acknowledges the discomfort without reinforcing the eating disorder?

**When body-image distress is high, what helps me reduce judgement?**

Clothing, environment, reducing checking, grounding, distraction, support or something else.

**What can I do instead of punishing myself?**

Choose actions that protect recovery and physical wellbeing.

**What boundaries could protect me from comparison?**

Social media, conversations, weighing, mirrors, comments or other triggers.

**What would I like to remember about difficult days?**

A hard moment is not the whole story of your recovery.

# My Self-Compassion Practice

Self-compassion is a practice rather than a personality trait. Some days it may feel natural; other days a neutral response may be the most compassionate thing you can manage.

One situation where I want to practise a kinder response

The sentence I want to practise

The supportive action I will pair with it

Something I want to recognise in myself today

## Books & useful support

**Self-Compassion** - Kristin Neff

**The Mindful Self-Compassion Workbook** - Kristin Neff & Christopher Germer

**8 Keys to Recovery from an Eating Disorder** - Carolyn Costin & Gwen Schubert Grabb

**Skills-based Caring for a Loved One with an Eating Disorder** - Janet Treasure, Anna Smith & Anna Crane  
Beat and the NHS provide UK eating-disorder information and support.

## A message from me

*Recovery can ask a great deal of you. There may be moments when you are frightened, frustrated or tired of having to keep trying. In those moments, adding criticism rarely makes the next step easier. Try speaking to yourself with the same respect you would offer someone sitting beside you who was struggling. You can acknowledge that something is hard and still recognise the effort you are making. Small, kinder responses can become part of how you move through recovery.*

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