

Self-Compassion and Body Neutrality in Recovery

Space to Breathe Therapy · Support Hub

A gentle, practical workbook for exploring body image, self-perception and recovery. You can skip any prompt or return to it later.

Understanding body neutrality

Body neutrality is the practice of treating your body with respect without requiring yourself to feel positive about its appearance. You may have difficult feelings and still deserve food, rest, care and comfortable clothing.

Reflect: What would caring for my body look like today if I did not need to approve of its appearance first?

Body image can fluctuate from day to day. Feelings are real experiences, but they are not always reliable evidence about how your body looks.

Reflect: What tends to make my body image harder, and what helps it feel less central?

Recognising the critical voice

Eating-disorder thoughts can sound absolute: I must look a certain way, I should not change, or I have failed. Try naming the thought rather than treating it as a fact: I am noticing the thought that...

Reflect: Write one difficult thought, then rewrite it beginning with I am noticing the thought that...

Self-compassion does not mean agreeing with every thought or forcing optimism. It means responding to distress without adding punishment.

Reflect: What would I say to someone I care about who was having this thought?

Reducing comparison and checking

Appearance comparisons, repeated mirror checking and reassurance seeking can make distress more persistent. Notice when an urge appears and ask what support you need underneath it.

Reflect: What situations lead me to compare or check, and what might I need instead?

Choose one gentle alternative: take a break from appearance-focused media, move attention to an activity you value, or discuss checking patterns with a professional. Avoid turning the alternative into another strict rule.

Reflect: What is one manageable alternative I could try?

Body care without body judgement

Your body supports everyday experiences: breathing, sensing, connecting, resting, moving and recovering. You do not have to feel grateful for every bodily function. Curiosity or neutrality is enough.

Reflect: What does my body help me experience that matters to me?

Sensory comfort is also care. Soft fabrics, adaptable clothing, breaks, temperature control and predictable routines can make daily life easier.

Reflect: Which comfort adjustments would support me this week?

Difficult moments and support

When distress rises, orient yourself to the room: notice the ground beneath you, name three objects around you, and choose one small supportive action. You can stop any exercise that feels unhelpful.

Reflect: What helps me feel safer or steadier in a difficult moment?

You are allowed to ask others not to comment on your body, weight or clothing. You can say: I would prefer not to talk about my appearance.

Reflect: What boundary or support request would I like to practise?

My personal compassion plan

A supportive plan can be simple: notice the difficult thought, respond with a kinder phrase, choose one practical action, and reach out if needed. Progress is not measured by always feeling positive.

Reflect: My compassionate phrase: _____

If body-image distress or eating-disorder symptoms intensify, contact your eating-disorder clinician, GP or trusted support person. This guide is educational and not a substitute for treatment.

Reflect: One person or service I can contact: _____