

COMPASSIONATE CHARACTER – self-compassion exercise

Source: I am enough - A guide to self-compassion, HelsinkiMission 2021

<https://www.helsinkimissio.fi/tarvitsetko-apua/nuorille/mina-riitan/> (Only in Finnish)

Translated and modified by Tiina Mäenpää, Osviitta Crisis Center

*In this exercise I use the word **character** and whether it'd be she/he/zee I call him or her this time **she**.*

In this exercise, you can practise kindness to yourself with the help of mental image of a compassionate character.

Find a comfortable position in your seat. Maybe feeling the soles of your feet on the ground and your arms resting on your lap. Close your eyes if that feels good to you right now. You can also choose a point to look at.

Start by focusing on your calming breath for about a minute.

You can pay attention to breathing out slightly longer than breathing in. Maybe you want to pause between breathing in and out.

Try not to force anything. Breathe calmly at your own pace.

Notice how your body becomes quiet and calm.

If you feel calm and warm during this exercise, allow yourself to enjoy the good feeling.

Find a compassionate person or character in your own life who has been kind, gentle, and supportive to you. It can be someone you have felt good and safe with.

It can also be an imaginary person, animal, or natural creature you have in mind. Someone who accepts you, feels warm toward you, and protects you.

Take a moment to think about a character who you think represents that warmth and compassion. A character who could care about you. It could be someone you know, someone you haven't personally known, or even a mythical character or character from a movie or book. It could also be a pet, if that suits you better.

Try to think of a character who represents compassion in a good way. If you can think of more than one character, choose one of them for this exercise.

Picture this character in your mind: what does she look like, what expression does she have on her face? Hear the tone of her voice.

Notice her warmth, acceptance, and kindness toward you. Imagine this warmth coming toward you and taking you into her embrace.

Try to put yourself in the shoes of this character for a moment. See yourself through her eyes, with warmth, acceptance, appreciation, and compassion.

Now step back into yourself and hear this character forgive you for everything your self-critical mind is blaming you for. You have received complete forgiveness for everything. This character sees you as a whole person here and now.

Also hear her acceptance. You are completely accepted as you are here and now, including all your strengths, areas for improvement, and your imperfections. You are perfect as you are at this stage of your growth. At this stage of your growth, you are perfect. You are perfect with all your thoughts and feelings.

Also hear her tell you that she values you. I greatly value you, as you are, here and now, at this stage of your humanity. Also hear her kind words to you: I hope you accept yourself as I accept you. I hope you treat yourself with acceptance and compassion. I hope you have joy and moments of happiness. I hope you have love in your life. I hope you have peace of mind. I hope you have a rich and meaningful life.

Now you can let the compassionate character move into the background while shifting your attention back to your breathing. Take a few calm and deep breaths.

Now open your eyes at your own pace and shake your arms and legs, while thanking yourself for putting in the effort to do this exercise. You have promoted your own well-being with this act.

“SELF-COMPASSION IS KINDNESS TOWARDS YOURSELF.”