

Taking a Compassion Break

Often committing to a practice to improve our mental health can feel like a really big commitment, especially when we are under extra stress and feel like we can barely stay on top of the news, and all the changes around us. However, when we are at our busiest or most stressed, that is when we need to put our mental health first, and give ourselves a break.

The **3-step Compassion Break** (Kristin Neff) is a fast exercise that we can do to restore some compassionate balance when:

- We notice that we're being hard on ourselves
- We're feeling overwhelmed by hurt or fear or loneliness
- We notice that we're thinking negatively about ourselves
- We're just a bit frazzled and need a break!

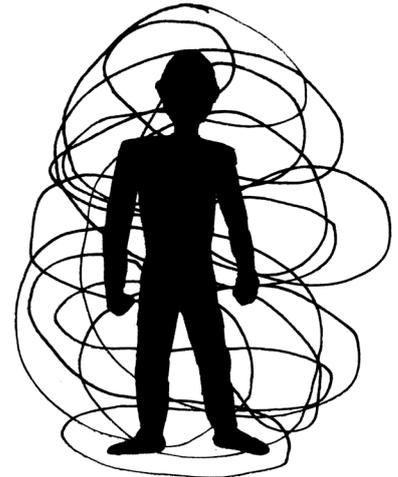
It's so fast to do that you can give it a go right now!

Step 1: This is a moment of suffering

Acknowledge what you're feeling, and that it's difficult. Accept it for what it is, and allow it to be there.

Step 2: Suffering is a part of being human

Remember that whatever difficult thing you're thinking or feeling right now is a natural, inevitable part of being human. It's a side effect of the immense complexity of our minds- the same complexity that allows us to love and care and hope. We all experience difficult feelings. They are a part of what it means to be human.



Step 3: May I be kind to myself

If we're always trying to push out pain and difficult feelings, then when we do experience them we might see it as a sign of weakness or inability to cope and be harder on ourselves as a result. Once we can accept suffering (step 1), and acknowledge that it is a key part of humanity (step 2), we are in a much better place to be kind to ourselves, and in doing so to protect our mental health.

Set an intention to be kind to yourself, and then put it in to action:

- What is something you can do **immediately** as a compassionate response to how you're feeling?
- What are you going to do **later today** to demonstrate compassion to yourself?

See our guide on '*Self-compassion in Self-isolation*', for ideas for immediate and longer-term things you can do to be compassionate to yourself.