

SELF-COMPASSION

with Kristin Neff & Brené Brown

EXERCISE:

Compassionate Letter

Everybody has habitual behaviors and certain ways of being that cause problems in life - things that they would sincerely like to change (i.e., an unhealthy diet, constant procrastination, snapping at people when frustrated).

When you notice that your typical way of motivating a change is to be harshly critical toward yourself, writing a compassionate letter to yourself can help to cultivate a more compassionate, encouraging voice.

There are different ways you can write the letter, but after doing so put the letter away and come back to read it again, savoring the feeling of being encouraged rather than bullied.

"Love, connection and acceptance are your birthright. To claim them you need only look within yourself."

-Kristin Neff

FROM A FRIEND TO YOURSELF

Think about an imaginary friend who is unconditionally wise, loving, and compassionate. Imagine that this friend can see all your strengths and weaknesses, including this unhelpful habit of behavior. This friend recognizes the limits of human nature, and is kind, accepting, and forgiving.

Write a letter to yourself from the perspective of this imaginary friend, focusing on the behavior you tend to judge yourself for.

After writing the letter, put it down for a little while. Then come back to it and read it again, really letting the words sink in. Feel the compassion as it pours into you, soothing and comforting you.

1. Write a letter to yourself from the perspective of a friend:

What would this friend say to you from the perspective of unlimited compassion? And if you think this friend would suggest possible changes you should make, how might these suggestions embody feelings of care, encouragement, and support?

FROM YOURSELF TO A FRIEND

2. Write a letter as if you were talking to a dearly loved friend who was struggling with the exact same behavior that you are.

What words of compassion and support would you offer?