



First Nations Health Authority  
Health through wellness

# Practising Self-Compassion



## PROVIDING LOVING KINDNESS FOR OURSELVES

During challenging times, it's vital that we are warm and understanding towards ourselves. Outlined below are three self-compassion activities that you may like to try.



## A RELAXATION EXERCISE

This is a short exercise that can be done as part of a self-care routine. Meditation can relieve stress, promote calmness, and help us to love ourselves more.

Find a comfortable position, sitting or lying down. If you feel safe, close your eyes. Take a few deep breaths to settle into your body and into the present moment. Put your hand over your heart, or wherever is comforting and soothing, as a reminder that you are bringing not only awareness, but loving awareness, to your experience and to yourself.

After a while, feel your breath where you notice it most easily. Feel your body breathe in and out, and when your attention wanders, return to the gentle movement of your breath once again.

Release your focus on the breath, or continue to have a background awareness of your breath as you repeat in your mind "I care about myself. I love myself. I deserve good things. I deserve happiness."

If this feels uncomfortable, try to find other positive things that you can say to yourself in your mind. You can also ask for help and guidance from the Creator, from your ancestors, or from any other source that you wish. If you already have phrases that are meaningful to you, use those.

If you are new to meditating, open your heart and mind to what you need to hear – words of wisdom and compassion that speak to you in the deepest way and will support you in your journey forward.

Open your heart to these words, whispering them gently into your own ear, again and again or hearing the words from the inside, allowing them to resonate within you. Allow the words to take up space - to fill your being - if only for this one moment.

Whenever you notice that your mind has wandered, refresh your aim by feeling the sensations in your body. Come home to your own body, then feel the importance of your words. Come home to kindness and love, for yourself and for others. Finally, release the words and rest quietly in your own body. Gently open your eyes.

Learn more about Indigenous mindfulness here: <https://www.indigenousmindfulness.com/>

### START A SELF-COMPASSION JOURNAL

Try keeping a daily self-compassion journal for one week (or longer if you like). Journaling is an effective way to express how you feel and can enhance both mental and physical wellness.

At the end of your day, when you have a few quiet moments, review the day's events. In your journal, write down anything that you felt bad about, anything you judged yourself for, or any difficult experience that caused you pain. For example, maybe you got angry with a family member for missing a FaceTime visit or you made inappropriate comments about someone on-line. Afterwards, you felt ashamed and embarrassed.

**Mindfulness:** For each event, use mindfulness and self-compassion to calmly acknowledge and accept your feelings and thoughts. Mindfulness mainly involves bringing awareness to the painful emotions that arose due to self-judgment or difficult circumstances.

Write about how you felt – sad, ashamed, frightened, stressed, and so on. As you write, try to be accepting and non-judgmental of your experience. Don't belittle it or be overly dramatic. For example you might write "I was frustrated because she missed the FaceTime visit. I got upset and angry, I wrote the post, and I felt regretful afterwards".

Mindfulness is often used by First Nations individuals and can be practised in many places – in isolation at home, outside on the land, by the water, under a tree, in a canoe, in your garden. Connect in whatever way feels comfortable to you. It's important to ground ourselves in our respect for the land, plants, trees, water, fire and animals.

**Common Humanity:** Write down the ways in which your experience was connected to the larger human experience. This might include acknowledging that being human means being imperfect and that all people have these sorts of painful experiences i.e., "Everyone overreacts sometimes, especially in times of uncertainty. It's human". You might also think about the causes and conditions underlying the painful event i.e., "My frustration was magnified by the fact that I can't to visit my family in person and or participate in ceremony. If the circumstances had been different, my reaction probably would have been different".



**Self-Kindness:** Write yourself some kind and understanding words of comfort. Let yourself know that you care about yourself. Try to adopt a gentle, reassuring tone. i.e., “It’s okay. You messed up but it wasn’t the end of the world. I understand how frustrated you were and you just lost it. Maybe you can try being extra kind with your family member this week”.

**Reasons to be Grateful:** Keeping a positive focus is important. Acknowledge the good things that you already have in your life and how these things can help keep you well during challenging times. Write down three things that you are grateful for.

### CREATE A LOVING KINDNESS PHRASE

There are three components to self-compassion. Practicing those components with this writing exercise will help you organize your thoughts and emotions while also helping you remember them. If you keep a journal regularly, your self-compassion practice will become even stronger and translate more easily into daily life. The Three Components of Self-Compassion:

1. Recognize that I am suffering
2. Remind myself that this is part of life
3. Express kindness to myself



First, think about times when you feel bad about yourself or are struggling. How do you typically respond to yourself in these situations? Please write down or think about what you typically do, what you say, and note the tone in which you talk to yourself. Ask yourself:

- What do I need to hear from myself?
- What do I long to hear from others?

Now imagine that a close friend feels really bad about themselves or is really struggling in some way. How would you respond to your friend in this situation, especially when you’re at your best? Please write down or think about what you would typically do, what you would say, and the tone in which you would typically talk to your friends.

It’s interesting how we can be so kind to our friends and family members when they are having a tough time but we find it difficult to express that same kindness to ourselves when we are struggling. What can you say to support yourself through tough times? What reassurance can you give yourself? When we practise saying positive things to ourselves on a regular basis, it helps us to grow in confidence and self-love. We can be our own cheerleaders and, with practice, we can learn and demonstrate self-compassion.