

Mental Health Essentials

Building a healthy mindset

Practice journal



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About this workbook

Congratulations on committing to building a healthy mindset through dedicated practice!

This workbook provides instructions on activities designed to develop stronger self-compassion, as well as a space to record your personal reflections.

You can save a digital copy of this workbook to your PC and type in your answers as you go, or you can print the workbook and hand write your answers. You can also record your answers as an audio or video diary and save the files as you go.

Choose whichever works best for you; the goal is to get to know yourself and practise treating yourself in a compassionate way. Afterall, self-compassion is a powerful tool to protect and improve your mental health.

Content warning

This workbook introduces thinking and feeling activities you can practise at home and work. A lot of people find these activities to be gentle and empowering.

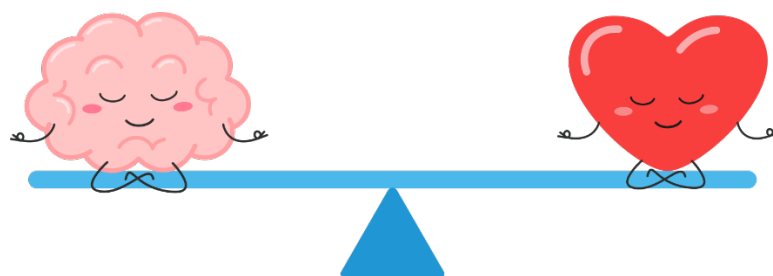
However, there's a risk that you may experience unpleasant feelings or thoughts when trying some of these practices, especially if you have a history of trauma or are experiencing significant hardship in your life.

As such, we recommend you consider getting the additional support of a trained counsellor or therapist when you start adopting some of the activities in this workbook, or ensuring you have a compassionate friend or family member you can talk to if difficult thoughts and feelings come up.

If you feel distressed at all while working through the activities, stop what you're doing and take a self-care break, such as a walk, gentle breathing, or doing an activity you like. Only return to the activities if/when you feel confident and appropriately supported.

You can also access support from:

- The employee assistance services offered by your workplace
- Your leader/supervisor or HR representative
- Private counsellors
- A general practitioner
- Lifeline on 131114



Activity 1

Self-compassion audit

Some of us practise the tender side of self-compassion well, but not the fierce side. Some of us don't do much of either.

>> Rate each of the following statements to identify how you currently apply self-compassion in your life.

		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Tender oriented: Accepting ourselves to alleviate suffering	When I suffer or struggle, I tell myself my feelings are valid.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	When I suffer or struggle, I try to comfort myself with kind self-talk.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	When I suffer or struggle, I pay attention to, and allow space for, my inner thoughts, emotions and body sensations.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	When I suffer or struggle, I soothe or nurture myself like I would a friend or family member.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fierce oriented: Taking action to alleviate suffering	I say 'yes' to things that I need or things that bring me pleasure.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	I say 'no' to things I don't want to do or experience.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	I purposely try to spread my compassionate energy as a force for good in the world.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

How did you go?

Do you think you need to work more on tender or fierce self-compassion? The ratings you assigned to each statement can be used as a benchmark for your starting point in developing stronger self-compassion. After you finish the 'Building a healthy mindset' module and spend a few weeks practising self-compassion, rate these statements again to see if you've had a positive shift.

Activity 2

Getting to know your inner critic

Most of us have an inner critic that uses harsh words to censor, find fault, judge and demean us. Knowing when and where our critical inner voice shows up means we can use these moments to practise replacing our inner critic with compassionate self-talk.

>> Answer the following questions to help you better understand your inner critic.



1. What do you typically criticise yourself for?

My inner critic triggers:

Click or tap here to enter text.

2. What are some of the things your inner critic typically says?

My inner critic comments:

Click or tap here to enter text.

3. What does your harsh critical voice sound like?

My harsh critical voice sound:

Click or tap here to enter text.

4. How does your inner critic make you feel (emotionally)?

My inner critic makes me feel (emotionally):

Click or tap here to enter text.

5. How does your inner critic make your body feel?

My inner critic makes my body feel:

Click or tap here to enter text.

TIP!

Next time your inner critic shows up, try to re-frame some of these harsh thoughts as kinder, more constructive ones.



Activity 3

Asking your inner critic for space

Some people respond to their inner critic in harsh ways: saying things like “No!” or “Shut up!”. This approach works for some, however a kinder, more empathic approach is to treat your inner critic with compassion and respect and ask it to back off instead of demanding it forcefully.

What are some words or statements you might use to compassionately respond to your harsh inner critic?

>> Write your responses in the space below, or alternatively create audio recordings of yourself saying some of these things.

Here are a few examples to get you started:

- “Hey there old annoying friend, thanks for trying to help, but right now I’m trying my best and what I really need is warm supportive vibes, not criticism.”
- “If you catch me procrastinating instead of working later, feel free to give me a gentle prod, but for now please lay off because it’s not helping – you’re distracting me from getting on with things.”

Things I can say to respond to my inner critic:

Click or tap here to enter text.

TIP!

Compassionately asking your inner voice for space can feel a little strange at first. Try speaking to yourself in different tones to find out which feels most authentic and helpful for you.



Activity 4

Inner critic re-framing

Re-framing is when we take the harsh thoughts of our inner critic and re-phrase them in a more helpful way, such as being more objective, seeing things from another angle or using kinder language.

>> In the space below, write down some thoughts your harsh inner critic says and try to re-frame them. We've provided you with an example to get started.

Inner critic thought	Re-framed thought
<p>Example:</p> <p>I can't believe you're so far behind on this project – you should be done by now and you're holding everyone up. You're so irresponsible and terrible with your time management.</p>	<p>Example:</p> <p>(Acknowledging the pain) Okay, I'm feeling really stressed and disappointed about how this project is going.</p> <p>(Re-framing the thought) But I need to remember, I've been really sick, and this is just one project out of many I've delivered on or before schedule. I'm being super harsh on myself for one bad performance. It'll get done and the world won't end if it takes an extra week, so I'll take a break to rest and then keep going after lunch.</p>
<p>Click or tap here to enter text.</p>	<p>Click or tap here to enter text.</p>
<p>Click or tap here to enter text.</p>	<p>Click or tap here to enter text.</p>

Activity 5

Create a compassionate image

Visualising a compassionate image (like a wise old tree, a person with a warm kind face or a newborn animal) can help spark compassionate feelings within you.

Spend five minutes in a calm space and create a compassionate image in your mind's eye that resonates with you.

>> Write a reflection on this visualisation exercise: What image did you create? How did it make you feel? (Remember, you can record a video diary entry instead).

My reflections

Example:

I'm sitting on the couch having a cup of tea with my mother who's listening to me and making me feel warm and safe. Her energy is very calm, controlled, and compassionate towards me. I feel like I can tell her anything and she won't judge me. Instead, she'll listen carefully and offer me support and wise advice.



The image I created was:

Click or tap here to enter text.

It made me feel:

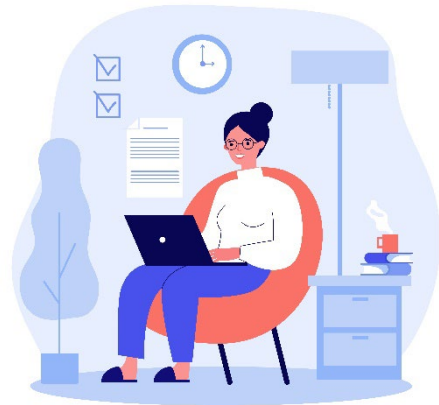
Click or tap here to enter text.

Activity 6

Write a compassionate letter to yourself

Writing yourself a compassionate letter is a good way to practise your self-compassion skills and help you take the time to process and work through problems in a self-caring, kind way. To help you get started, here are some prompts to structure your letter:

- Dear...
- I'm writing to you because...
- I'm sorry you have to go through this...
- I hope you know...
- I'm wondering have you thought about...
- Please know I...
- With love, ...



>> Take some time to write a letter to yourself addressing a current concern or issue you're having, or one you've had in the past.

My compassionate letter

Example:

Dear Joanne,

I'm writing to you because you're having such a tough time with your health and also having to care for three little kids while trying to work.

I'm sorry you have to go through this, it's so much for one person to deal with and it's really unfair that you've had so many years of health issues and pain.

I hope you know that I'm so amazed at how strong you are to keep getting up every day and giving your energy to looking after and loving your children. You're a real warrior.

I'm wondering if you've thought about asking for a bit more help so you can have some rest? You deserve it and you need it, there's no shame in leaning on others.

Please know I hope you can learn to give yourself as much loving kindness as you give everyone else because you're a wonderful person.

With love, Joanne

My compassionate letter

Click or tap here to enter text.

Activity 7

Soothing touch

Find a quiet space and take 5-10 minutes to try out some of the soothing touches mentioned in the Soothing touch video you watched in the module. See which you find most comforting and reassuring, and which aren't helpful.

>> Write down your reflections of how each type of touch felt to you.

Type of touch	How did it feel?
Hand (palm) on heart	Click or tap here to enter text.
Hand (fist) on heart	Click or tap here to enter text.
Hand/s on belly	Click or tap here to enter text.
One hand on chest, one hand on belly	Click or tap here to enter text.
Hand on face/cheek	Click or tap here to enter text.
Hand on shoulders	Click or tap here to enter text.
Self-hug	Click or tap here to enter text.
Gentle strokes	Click or tap here to enter text.

TIP!

If you find all of the above soothing touches uncomfortable, there are more active and less gentle forms of self-touch you can try, for example tapping, stretching, or self-massage.

Activity 8

Things that bring you pleasure

Have you ever spent time thinking deeply about the things in life that bring you pleasure? When we're happy, we release feel-good chemicals; dopamine, serotonin, oxytocin and adrenalin.

Knowing what brings you pleasure means that when you're having a tough day or moment, you can try doing some of the things that make you happy, to get a boost of these feel-good chemicals and break you out of a potential downward mood spiral.



>> [Make a list of all the little things you can do to bring you pleasure.](#)

Things that bring me pleasure

Click or tap here to enter text.

TIP!

Keep adding to your list over time. Aim for 50 or even 100 things that bring you pleasure. Notice how the things that bring you pleasure might change and grow over time.

If you can't think of anything to add to your list, consider talking to a professional counsellor or therapist about some more advanced ways that you can bring pleasure back into your life.

Activity 9

Write a compassionate journal entry

Journaling is a powerful tool for supporting and strengthening your wellbeing.

>> Use the following questions as prompts for a compassionate journal entry, to help you work through self-critical thoughts.

Question	My journal entry
What is triggering my self-critical thinking? (E.g. a situation, a memory, a person)	
What is the self-critical part of me saying? What emotion(s) am I feeling? (Rate intensity of main emotion 0-100%)	
What physical sensations or behaviours go with these feelings?	
What tone of voice is my inner critic using?	
How much do I believe my self-critical thoughts (0-100%)?	
How intense (out of 10) is my emotion?	

Now, breathe slowly, try to relax your muscles (drop your shoulders, eyebrows, tongue, belly). Bring your compassionate image or feelings to mind.

>> Continue your journal entry using the following questions as prompts.

Question	My journal entry
What does my compassionate image (or the compassionate part of me) have to say about this?	
What advice would I give to a friend I deeply care about who was thinking and feeling this way?	
What does the compassionate part of me want to say to the self-critical part?	
What are some other ways of viewing this situation that might be more realistic, kinder, or more helpful to me?	
How will I feel about this in 1 week, 1 month, or 1 year? (If it won't matter much then, can I let go of it now)?	
What can I do to cope and look after myself now?	

What's a more compassionate and helpful conclusion to replace the self-criticism?	
How much do I believe my critical thoughts now?	
How intense is my initial main emotion now (1-10)?	

TIP!

Use this process to work through critical thoughts as often as you need – the more you practise, the more it will become second nature.

Wrap up

Congratulations! Look back on how far you've come and how much you've achieved!!

You've stuck at this module and worked hard on learning about self-compassion and practising your self-compassion skills.

- You've learned about and practised fierce and tender self-compassion
- You know why it's important
- You've learned and practised thinking and self-talk strategies
- You've learned and practised soothing touch strategies
- You've gotten to know yourself better and taken steps to practise more self-compassion in your life

Go you! It's not easy work and it takes a lot of brainpower and effort. But you stuck with it and that in itself is a great act of fierce self-compassion!

Save this workbook and use the exercises to keep building your healthy mindset whenever you wish in the future. You can also use your notes and reflections to benchmark your progress and see how much your thoughts, feelings and actions change with practice and time.

