

Video Yourself for Self-Compassion

This exercise is an adaptation of Kirsten Neff's Self-Compassion Letter exercise to a video format.

1st video:

Think of some ways in which you have recently been hyper self-critical lately. You may want to write some things down. Find a private place and record yourself saying these things out loud. Use the voice that you hear in your head when you are telling yourself things that cause you to feel shame.

Take a break for a half hour or more and return to watch and listen to the video you have made. Before you listen to it, get into the mindset of a wise warm-hearted friend who cares about you deeply. If you don't have someone like that in your life, imagine such a person. Watch the video as that person. That person knows you and your history of different experiences, including difficulties that you have lived through. They understand how these experiences have impacted and influence you and they believe in your potential for goodness. They respect your conscience and your moral principles, so will not just reassure you and let you off the hook. But they will be encouraging and remind you of the good things you have done.

2nd video:

You may want to write down some notes first so that you can say everything you can think of. After you have listened to the first video, record yourself responding to it as a wise and warm-hearted friend. As much as possible, feel how that person would feel. Try to forget for the moment that you are talking to yourself. You are talking to someone you really care about.

When you are done, take another break. Then come back and listen to what the wise, warm-hearted friend has said. But before you do, relax, take some breaths, open your heart and prepare to receive these compassionate words. Don't resist or block or fend off those feelings. After you have watched the entire video, don't get up immediately. Stay with the feelings as if you are a steeping in them like a bag of tea in hot water.

Let your experience be okay, whatever it is. If it moved you- great. If it didn't that's okay. You have planted a seed that will grow.

You can come back and listen to the 2nd video again in the future and maybe you will be able to hear it more deeply then. You can also do this whole exercise multiple times, perhaps focusing on other areas that you tend to harshly criticize yourself.

Self-compassion is not an indulgence or a way to be complacent. It is a way to free yourself up *so that* you can get on with being the best person you can be, no longer crippled and paralyzed by shame.