

Day 8 Healing Trauma with Compassion and kindness



Kindness. Compassion. Unconditional love. Acceptance. What do those words mean to you? Let's do a mindfulness inquiry. We drop in some words and notice our response. You can read or [listen](#) here.

I am interested in myself. I really want to get to know who I am.

Notice your response. What does that feel like in your body?

I am fascinated. I really want to know myself deeply.

Does that feel true? Does it feel like there is something wrong with that?

Have you ever heard these words? "Don't be too full of yourself." "Who do you think you are?" "Don't get too big of a head."

As adults, we can see these instructions are not helpful. We can get to know ourselves. We can stand up and say "*This is what I believe. This is who I am. I like and respect myself.*" We don't have to be perfect to like ourselves and be interested in getting to know ourselves.

I like who I am becoming. I am someone who is worth getting to know.

Stay in tune with your body, breath and energy or sensations in your body.

It is possible I don't have to defend myself against knowing who I am. It is safe for me to know myself. If that doesn't feel 100% true for you right now, could you be open to the possibility?

I'm not perfect. I'm not 100% healed. I'm not always fun and happy and grateful. I'm good enough right now just as I am. I am worth getting to know.

Take your time with this, then open your eyes. It is interesting to come back to this and see how your responses change over time.

There is so much joy and beauty in a human life and there is so much hardship. Compassion comes more naturally when we acknowledge that our situations can be difficult. There is so much pressure and ideas about how we should be, that there is not much room for our humanity.

We can make room in our own mind and hearts for the wonderful complexity of being human. We live in these mammal bodies with primitive brains. We gather evidence throughout our lives about what is safe and what's not. We have a negativity bias and our whole system is set up to keep our body alive. On top of that, we live around and are affected by people who are not emotionally self-regulated.

For a few minutes, we're taking time to be present with ourselves and to practice kindness and compassion. Bring your attention to your heart center right now and notice how you feel. [Listen here.](#)

We all enjoy feeling open hearted and don't enjoy feeling shut down. However you feel right now will not be helped by judging yourself. This is where acceptance comes in.

Tune in to your whole body from head to toes. Soften your forehead and eyebrows. Relax your neck and shoulders, and the large muscles of your upper back. It is common to have our shoulders up around our ears, but it doesn't help. Sometimes we have that defensive hardening through the back of our upper body.

Notice your breath. As you breathe in, the muscle fibres in your stomach lengthen. Let them soften. Breathe out and let your stomach softly settle back towards your spine.

Focus on a smooth, even rhythm of breath. If it is jerky, there is fear or anxiety. Acknowledge that and hold yourself with kindness. To date your life experiences have led to this pattern of holding your breath or tightness throughout your body. Let go of shaming yourself for your breathing patterns.

Can you be kind to yourself? You didn't set out to become a wreck with a tight body, dysregulated breathing and catastrophic thinking! These are trauma responses. We always want the best for ourselves. What is best is an attitude of openness and softness, of not judging or shaming.

Kindness and compassion are what is best. I am willing to want the best for myself. Stay focused on your breath and let your whole body be grounded.

Your conscious mind might get involved and point out times you've done something not in your best interest. We're not really interested in the conscious mind right now.

We're settling into the heart, to our deep knowing. We're nurturing our willingness to be kind and compassionate with ourselves. Visualize using all of your senses. What would your life be like if you were consistently kind and compassionate with yourself? Feel it in your body to start. It would be relaxed and you would have lots of energy. Your breath would be healthy and smooth, getting lots of oxygen into your brain and body.

Your mind would be calmer. You would notice and challenge any shaming or judging thoughts because they are not the norm now. They are not true and they are not helpful.

You are present with yourself, grounded in your body. Without tension and tightness, you move more easily and your health is better.

What would people see on your face, this face of a person who is kind with themselves?

What would your relationships be like? If you feel isolated now, and have anxiety about meeting new people, that would change. If people were not such a threat, there would be more kindness and compassion for others as well. That naturally grows out of your heart.

If you feel resistance to this exercise, see if you could have compassion for yourself that you're feeling resistance. We're not performing monkeys. We get to have whatever experience we have, and then we could be soft with ourselves.

Rest your attention into your heart center. Let go of resistance just for a moment. Notice what it feels like in your heart center. You could be present with yourself and feel.

With mindfulness inquiry, there is no right or wrong answer. We're tuning in to see what is happening in our system - body, breath, thoughts in the mind.

Whatever is happening in our system has been formed by experience. Tension in your body or unhealthy thinking patterns are a response to fear and threat. Now our practice could be to hold ourselves with kindness, to see the truth and stop shaming, and to hold space for the possibility of being kind and compassionate with ourselves.

Compassion practice for ourselves and someone we love

[Listen here.](#) Bring to mind something you think you should have done differently. I'll use an example of being socially isolated and you could work with that or your own experience.

Imagine you are sitting with one of your children or a dear friend, and they are sharing a difficult situation. It's the same as yours. They see the cost of isolating themselves. They understand the mechanism of it and how it grew through their childhood. They didn't feel connected and those neural networks didn't develop optimally.

They want to be more socially connected, yet they're afraid. They have been hurt so many times, and their nervous system is in a state of hypervigilance. They are invited to a party and they drive up, but can't make themselves go inside. Or they go in and feel so uncomfortable that they make an excuse and leave.

Notice what it feels like in your body as you are listening to them. What would you say to them? Would you be kind and try to comfort them?

What do you say to yourself? *Get out of the car. Stop being so stupid. This is ridiculous.*

Would you say that to them? Is the kindness and empathy you feel for them available to you? Can you be supportive to yourself the way you are to them?

This inquiry can help us see clearly how hard-hearted we can be towards ourselves. Put your hand on your heart. Bring to mind the face of your friend. Feel the compassion in your heart. Allow yourself to feel that for you as well.

You could go back and forth between the image of your friend and yourself. Imagine you are saying those supportive words to you, replacing the critical voice with the supportive one. If you can be kind and compassionate with your friend, can you apply that to yourself? Stay with it as long as you like and come back to it whenever you feel kind of hard-hearted.

Bring it vividly to mind. How would you feel if this happened to someone you love? Can you bring this kindness and compassion to yourself?