

Self Care

TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF

BREATHING TECHNIQUES

Breathing can help lower the heart rate and give you a moment of mindfulness to reset.

Breath to Center

To be used during routine activities, such as washing your hands or during a moment of stress to calm your nervous system

1. Breathe three full breaths, deeper and longer than usual, focusing on each breath.
2. If focusing on the breath causes anxiety, instead focus attention on the sensation of your feet, rooted into the ground or the weight of your seat on the chair.

Box Breathing

To be used during moments of stress

1. Inhale for 4 counts
2. Hold for 4 counts
3. Exhale for 4 counts
4. Hold for 4 counts

Breathing Compassion

To be used when feeling triggered or overwhelmed by emotion

1. Ground your attention on deep breaths/your feet on the earth.
2. Notice the emotion as body sensations.
3. Inhale, breathe in the emotion into vast space.
4. Exhale, breathe out relief for yourself and others.

SHOWING COMPASSION

Compassion not only help the individual showing compassion, but also the one receiving it.

Self-compassion Antidote

To be used when feeling stressed or self-critical

1. Recognize: "This is suffering."
2. Choose a self-compassion ritual (hand on chest/belly/wrist).
3. Acknowledge: "I'm doing my best." "Everyone is doing their best." "I let go of outcomes beyond my control."



Compassion Break

For difficult situations or ones causing stress

1. Call the situation to mind that is difficult or causing you stress, see if you can actually feel the stress and emotional discomfort in your body.
2. Say to yourself: this is stress.
 - **Suffering is a part of life.** This is common humanity. Other options include:
 - Other people feel this way.
 - I'm not alone.
 - We all struggle in our lives.
3. Put your hands over your heart, feel the warmth of your hands and the gentle touch of your hands on your chest. Or adopt a soothing touch that feels right for you. Say to yourself:
 - **May I be kind to myself.** You can also ask yourself, "What do I need to hear right now to express kindness to myself?" Is there a phrase that speaks to you in your particular situation, such as:
 - May I give myself the compassion that I need.
 - May I learn to accept myself as I am.
 - May I forgive myself.
 - May I be strong.
 - May I be patient.

SUPPORTIVE TOUCH

Touch helps to calm the body and down and make an individual feel safe.

Hand on Heart

To be used when feeling stressed

1. Take 2-3 deep, satisfying breaths.
2. Gently place your hand over your heart, feeling the gentle pressure and warmth of your hand. If you wish, place *both* hands on your chest, noticing the difference between one and two hands.
3. Feel the touch of your hand on your chest. If you wish, you could make small circles with your hand on your chest.
4. Feel the natural rising and falling of your chest as you breathe in and as you breathe out.
5. Linger with the feeling for as long as you like.
6. Other options instead of your hand on your heart include:
 - a. Hand on your cheek
 - b. Cradling your face in your hands
 - c. Gently stroking your arms
 - d. Crossing your arms and giving a gentle squeeze
 - e. Gently rubbing your chest, or using circular movements
 - f. Hand on your abdomen
 - g. One hand on your abdomen and one over heart



CHANGING CRITICAL SELF TALK

This should be done over the course of several weeks to help change how you relate to yourself. This can be done through writing in a journal or simply through internal dialogue.

1. Notice when you are being self-critical.

- It may be that your self-critical voice is so common for you that you don't even notice when it is present.
- Whenever you're feeling bad about something, think about what you've just said to yourself. Try to be as accurate as possible, noting your inner speech word for word. What words do you actually use when you're self-critical? Are there key phrases that come up over and over again? What is the tone of your voice – harsh, cold, angry? Does the voice remind you of anyone in your past who was critical of you?
- You want to be able to get to know the inner self-critic very well, and to become aware of when your inner judge is active. Really try to get a clear sense of how you talk to yourself.

2. Make an active effort to soften the self-critical voice with compassion rather than self-judgment.

- Say something like “I know you're worried about me and feel unsafe, but you are causing me unnecessary pain. Could you let my inner compassionate self say a few words now?”

3. Reframe the observations made by your inner critic in a friendly, positive way.

- If you're having trouble thinking of what words to use, imagine what a truly compassionate friend would say to you in this situation.
- Use a term of endearment that strengthens expressed feelings of warmth and care if that helps. You can say something like:
 - “I know you ate that bag of cookies because you're feeling really sad right now and you thought it would cheer you up. But you feel even worse and are not feeling good in your body. I want you to be happy, so why don't you take a long walk so you feel better?”
- While engaging in supportive self-talk, try gently stroking your arm, or holding your face tenderly in your hands. Physical gestures of warmth can tap into the caregiving system even if you're having trouble calling up emotions of kindness at first, releasing oxytocin that will help change your biochemistry.
- The important thing is that you start acting kindly, and feelings of true warmth and caring will eventually follow.

