

# COVID-19 Mental Health & Coping Resources

F O R E V E R Y O N E

## BUILDING RESILIENCE SERIES

*Part 3 of this series reviewed how to work with fear by re-framing negative self-talk. Those who rely on negative self-talk for motivation might be surprised to hear that self-compassion is more likely to build healthy resilience. Part 4 of the Building Resilience Series is on self-compassion. Research shows self-compassion is unequivocally linked to mental well-being, including reduced stress, anxiety, depression, and perfectionism.*

## Self-compassion

During this health crisis, you might notice times that that you are hard on yourself – perhaps that you are “failing” to keep yourself calm, to maintain normalcy or to be your best for others. Using self-compassion can help shift your perspective out of the negative self-spiral, and into a safe space.

What does self-compassion look like and how is it related to accepting emotions (Part 1 of this series)? While mindful acceptance says, ‘Feel the pain,’ self-compassion says, ‘Cherish yourself in the midst of the pain.’ Self-compassion also helps us re-frame negative self-talk (Part 3 of this series) – shifting our inner dialogues from catastrophic and belittling to gentle and encouraging.

Self-compassion researcher and professor of psychology at the University of Texas at Austin, Kristin Neff, says using this skill is about treating yourself the way you would treat a friend who is having a hard time, feeling inadequate, or is facing a tough life challenge.



### 1. Use Self-kindness instead of self-judgment.

Rather than judging and beating ourselves up inside, we choose kindness or “self-coaching.” Learning to coach yourself requires you to back yourself through suffering.

- **Try this:** put your hand on your heart and repeat kind phrases to yourself: “This is a moment of suffering. Suffering is part of life. May I be kind to myself.” If this feels too corny to you, find another soothing prompt that works for you.

**2. Ask for help.** This might not be the best time to “handle things on your own.” Experiment with giving someone else the chance to support you. Ask for help or for perspective from someone you trust; or say “yes” when they offer.

**3. Appreciate our common humanity.** When we suffer, it is easy to feel alone - that it’s only “ME” who is having such a hard time. But through self-compassion, we connect to the fact that all people suffer, and all people are imperfect. We remind ourselves that suffering is a part of life, and while COVID-19 may feel scary and unfair, the collective efforts of all humans, will help us move through this unprecedented challenge.

\*To get started practicing compassion to the mindfulness recording that accompanies this tip sheet.