

---

# Self-Compassion and Intuitive Eating

---

## What is self-compassion?

Self-compassion is defined as the ability to treat oneself with care and kindness at times of distress and disappointment. We are often harder on ourselves than we are on others. Self-compassion involves being kind to ourselves and is especially important when we are making lifestyle changes. It improves our acceptance and understanding of ourselves and of others. This can help us feel more connected to ourselves and those around us.

## How does this relate to practicing intuitive eating?

Just like when we take up a new hobby or are learning a new skill, it takes time to adjust to the practice of intuitive eating. There will be days in which we succeed at applying all the principles, and days that we will not. This is part of being human. The ways in which we handle setbacks will have an impact on our long-term success. Research has supported that those who practice self-compassion daily are more likely to engage in intuitive eating behaviors.

## Tips to Facilitate Self-Compassion:

### 1. Treat yourself as you would a small child or good friend.

- Imagine yourself as a small child or imagine what a child might say to you as you are facing a difficult or stressful situation.
- You can also think about the ways you would treat a good friend if they are facing a difficult situation and direct these compassionate responses towards yourself.

### 2. Practice Mindfulness.

- It is easy to get swept away with negative storylines and giving into the inner critic. Mindfulness exercises can help you nurture and accept yourself in moments of pain and self-criticism.
- Becoming aware of our thoughts and how they affect our feelings and behaviors can help us be more compassionate towards ourselves.
- Practicing mindfulness can help us nurture and accept ourselves during difficult times.

### 3. Remember that you are not alone.

- To feel is human. We are all imperfect. Keep in mind other people feel this way and you are not alone. We all struggle.
- Feelings of failure and inadequacy are part of the experience of living a human life. This is how we learn and evolve.

---

#### **4. Write a letter to yourself.**

- Think of a difficult or stressful situation you have faced or continue to face that causes you pain and suffering. Write a letter to yourself describing the situation without placing blame.

#### **5. Consider engaging in supportive touch.**

- When you're feeling badly or when under stress consider practicing supportive touch to care and comfort yourself.
- Touch activates our parasympathetic nervous system to help us calm down and feel safe.
- Ways to Practice:
  - Put your hand on your heart and feel your heartbeat
  - Cross your arms and giving yourself a gentle squeeze
  - Cup one hand in the other in your lap
  - Practice any other supportive touch that works for you

#### **6. Change your critical self-talk.**

- In a journal or by speaking aloud to yourself, or thinking silently, consider the following:
- Notice when you are being critical. Think about what you've said to yourself. Notice the tone of your voice and the words you use. Get a clear sense of how you tend to relate to yourself. Get to know your inner critic.
- Connect with your inner self-critic in a compassionate, non-judgmental way. For example, "I know you're worried about me and feel unsafe, but you're causing me unnecessary pain. Could you let my inner compassionate self say a few words now?"
- Reframe the words of your inner critic in a positive way. Imagine what you would say to a friend or child. Engage in supportive self-talk.

#### **7. Help yourself identify what you really want.**

- Think of ways you use self-criticism as a motivator. Do you think being hard on yourself will help you change?
- See if you can think of a kinder way to motivate yourself to change. What's the most supportive message you can think of?
- As you notice yourself being judgmental about your unwanted trait(s) in the future notice pain of your self-judgement and give yourself compassion. Try to quiet the inner critic and reframe your inner dialogue to be more encouraging and supportive.
- Always remember love is a more powerful motivator than fear.