

Talking to yourself like someone you care about

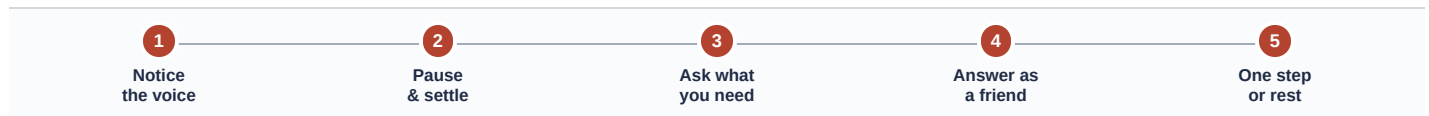
A flexible, adapted reflection practice for meeting a hard moment with a little more kindness.

A skill, not a personality trait.

Self-compassion means treating yourself with the kindness you would offer a good friend, especially when things go wrong. It is not letting yourself off the hook; it may help make it easier to respond, repair, or take one next step. Like any skill, it can become more familiar with practice.

Use this in session or on your own. Choose one recent, manageable moment when you were hard on yourself. Skip anything that does not fit; you can pause, leave a line blank, or come back later. For education and reflection; not a diagnostic tool.

1 THE SELF-COMPASSION PAUSE — five parts that may overlap or happen in a different order.



1 Notice the harsh voice

Self-critical talk is often automatic: “I’m such a failure,” or “I always mess this up.” Simply catching it is the first practice. Stay present with what you feel without judging it.

What I tell myself: _____

2 Pause and settle the body

Choose what feels workable. You might rest a hand over your heart or give yourself a gentle hug; you might instead put your feet on the floor, look around, hold an object, or simply pause. If breathing helps, keep it slow and gentle—do not force it. You can step away and return later.

What helps me settle: _____

3 Ask what you need

When overwhelmed, ask, “What do I need right now?” It might be rest, reassurance, a boundary, or a friend. Give yourself room to answer with kindness rather than a to-do list.

What I need right now: _____

4 Answer the way a friend would

Replace harsh words with the ones you would use for someone you love. You might use your own name, as if comforting a friend, if that creates a little distance from the critical thought.

A friend would say: _____

5 One small step — or rest

Progress over perfection: small steps forward are still steps forward. Sometimes the compassionate step is a break. You can forgive a mistake and still choose a next step; both can be part of growth.

My small step, or rest: _____

Check the feeling, too

Difficult emotions are real. Feelings can shift over time, even when you do not have to solve everything now. **“This too shall pass”** is not dismissal; it can be a reminder that you may be able to get through this moment.

Optional reflection: Where did the harsh voice learn its lines? Whose approval is it chasing? You might practice holding your worth as more than other people’s approval, while remembering that relationships and support can still matter. Comparing your inside to someone else’s outside is not a fair test.

Practice a kinder response

You do not have to believe the kind words yet—only to practice saying something that does not make the moment harder.

CHOOSE ONE WAY IN

WORDS · REFRAME	BODY · SETTLE	CONNECT · REACH OUT
You might repeat a short affirmation when the critic shows up, or write a letter to yourself from someone who loves you unconditionally. Choose words that feel possible to say without forcing belief. SAY <i>"This is hard, and I can take one next step." "I am enough." "____, you are doing your best with what you have."</i>	Touch is optional: a hand on your heart or a gentle hug might fit, or you might choose feet on the floor, looking around, holding an object, or simply pausing. You could try a body scan, send thanks to each part, or picture a safe place or supportive person. If you try breathing, keep it slow, gentle, and comfortable. 4–7–8 is one optional count (in for 4, hold 7, out 8); you can shorten it, skip the hold, or return to ordinary breathing if it feels uncomfortable. TRY <i>One comfortable breath—or simply one pause—before deciding anything.</i>	You might speak with a friend who listens without judgment. Extending compassion to others can also be one way to reconnect with your values or with other people. SAY <i>"I don't need advice—I need to say this out loud."</i>

A worked example

I send a report with a mistake in it. I think, "Everyone will see I'm not good at this," and my chest tightens. I spend the evening replaying it and avoid checking my inbox.

A kinder response: I choose a pause that fits: my feet on the floor and one gentle breath. "Jordan, you made an error—that is what people do. Making mistakes and struggling are part of being human; I am not alone in having a hard moment. You can fix it in the morning." I write down what I need tonight: rest, and one text to a friend.

2 MY MOMENT, IN A FEW LINES

Use your example from page 1. Fragments are fine; leave blanks if needed.

When _____

I tell myself _____

I feel / notice in my body _____

A friend in my place would hear _____

What I actually need is _____

I could forgive myself for _____

3 ONE PRACTICE I'LL TRY

Make it small enough to be doable—not impressive.

When I notice _____

The practice I'll try is _____

Three things I'm grateful for today _____

After trying it, I'll look for _____

Check in with yourself daily—and make the check-in itself a kind one. Notice what helped and what you would adjust.

If kindness feels fake at first

That can be a normal reaction. The critical voice may have had years of practice; the kinder one can feel new. Gently laughing at your own imperfections is allowed—life is not always as serious as it feels. Nurture your strengths: notice what you do well, no matter how small; do something creative; or set a boundary that protects your peace. If you are working with a counselor, bring the moments when kindness was hardest, not just the ones that went well.

If difficult feelings feel overwhelming, persistent, or unsafe, seek support from a qualified clinician or local urgent/crisis service.