



# Employee NEWSLETTER

Employee Assistance Program  
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## Self-Compassion for Beginners

Adapted from Adi Jaffe Ph.D.

**This disconnect between how we treat others and how we treat ourselves can silently erode our happiness, productivity, and sense of self-worth. But here's the good news: Self-compassion isn't an indulgence; it's fuel for resilience.**

Self-compassion is a key factor in resilience and being kind to yourself in your mistakes could lead to major breakthroughs and successes. Cultivating compassion for self can be learned, regardless of early life experiences.

### The Science of Self-Compassion

Research shows that self-compassion is not just a feel-good concept; it's a powerful tool for growth and resilience. According to Kristin Neff, a pioneer in the field, self-compassion involves treating yourself with the same kindness, care, and understanding that you'd offer a good friend.

**1. A Resilience Boost:** Studies show that people who practice self-compassion are better equipped to bounce back from failure. Instead of spiraling into self-doubt, they view setbacks as opportunities for growth.

**2. Reduced Stress:** Self-compassion has been linked to lower levels of cortisol, the stress hormone, and increased production of oxytocin, the "love hormone." This combination creates a sense of safety and well-being.

**3. Improved Performance:** Contrary to the myth that self-compassion makes you "soft," it actually enhances motivation. When we're kind to ourselves, we're more likely to take risks, try again, and persevere.

Self-compassion doesn't mean excusing your mistakes or avoiding accountability. It means acknowledging your imperfections without letting them define you.

### Why We're So Hard on Ourselves

If self-compassion is so beneficial, why is it so hard for so many of us? The answer lies in a mix of societal conditioning and evolutionary psychology.

**1. The Motivation Myth.** From a young age, many of us were taught that criticism is a form of accountability. But in reality, harsh self-judgment often leads to paralysis or avoidance, not growth. Mixing hard work with compassion for mistakes can make it more likely you'll work through failure.

**2. The Survival Instinct.** Our brains are wired to protect us from threats, but they're not great at distinguishing between external dangers and internal mistakes. That's why a small failure like forgetting a deadline can feel like a life-or-death situation, triggering an avalanche of self-blame.

**3. Cultural Pressures.** We live in a society that prizes perfection and achievement, often at the expense of mental health. The pressure to "hustle" and "grind" can make self-compassion feel like a weakness when it's actually a strength.

*Continued on the next page.*

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## The 3 Pillars of Self-Compassion

At its core, self-compassion is about changing the way you relate to yourself. Neff identifies three foundational pillars that make this practice so effective.

**1. Self-Kindness.** Self-kindness involves treating yourself with the same warmth, care, and understanding you'd offer a good friend. Instead of harshly criticizing yourself when things go wrong, you approach your mistakes with gentleness and encouragement.

*Example: Replace "I'm such a failure" with "I made a mistake, but I can learn and grow from this."*

**2. Common Humanity.** One of the biggest traps of self-criticism is feeling isolated—like you're the only person who makes mistakes or falls short. Common humanity reminds us that imperfection is a shared experience, not a personal flaw, fostering a sense of connection rather than alienation.

*Example: When you think, "Why can't I get this right?" remind yourself, "Everyone struggles sometimes. I'm not alone in this."*

**3. Mindfulness.** Mindfulness is the ability to observe your thoughts and emotions without judgment or over-identification. Instead of getting swept up in self-critical narratives, mindfulness helps you acknowledge your pain while creating space for clarity and balance.

*Example: Instead of thinking, "I'll never succeed," practice noticing your feelings: "I'm feeling disappointed right now. That's okay—it's temporary."*

## How These Pillars Work Together

Research suggests that these three components—self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness—work synergistically to enhance well-being and performance. A 2019 meta-analysis published in *Clinical Psychology Review* confirmed that self-compassion practices significantly reduce anxiety, depression, and stress while boosting emotional resilience and overall happiness.

## How to Start Practicing Self-Compassion Today

Starting small can make all the difference. Here are three simple ways to integrate self-compassion into your daily life.

**1. Catch Your Inner Critic in Action.** Pay attention to the way you talk to yourself. If you catch a harsh or self-critical thought, pause and reframe it. Ask yourself: Would I say this to a friend?

**2. Take a Self-Compassion Break.** When you're feeling overwhelmed, use Neff's three-step mantra. Acknowledge the pain: "This is a moment of suffering." Normalize the experience: "Suffering is part of life." Offer kindness: "May I be kind to myself in this moment."

**3. Practice Self-Affirming Language.** Consider adding self-affirmation work to your daily practice. Many of us can be incredibly uncomfortable with expressing the good in ourselves. Start simply with a statement that follows the "I am..." structure where you recognize an aspect of yourself that is positive.

## Be Your Own Champion

Self-compassion isn't a luxury or a sign of weakness; it's a superpower. It's the tool that helps you recover from setbacks, embrace your humanity, and move forward with resilience.

## First Choice Health EAP Provides Support

We understand that easing mental stress is an important part of health and overall well-being. You may find yourself in need of assistance. Please remember that First Choice Health EAP licensed clinical staff are here to provide support.

Call us at (800) 777-4114 or visit [www.FirstChoiceEAP.com](http://www.FirstChoiceEAP.com) to request a referral or learn more about your EAP. **Your EAP sessions are confidential and available 24/7.**

## References:

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/all-about-addiction/202501/self-compassion-for-beginners>