

“You Can’t Pour from an Empty Cup”



Self-Care and Self Compassion

Give yourself some grace, because you wear **SO MANY** hats! You tend to instinctually put everyone else’s needs before your own. Then one day you wake up and you barely recognise yourself because you have constantly put yourself last and have fallen out of touch with who you are, which is not good for your own physical and mental health.

A good analogy (think pre-flight safety demonstrations) “Put on your own oxygen mask first before trying to help others, because you can’t help anyone if you can’t breathe” When you stop making yourself a priority then it can feel like you can’t breathe.

Every time you feel yourself slipping or struggling, feeling like there is no way for you to take some time for yourself, please remember, it is self-care – it’s your oxygen mask!

You need to take care of you first, this is not selfish – it is essential. You need to take care of you so you can be your best self and the rest will follow. Choosing to put yourself first and do something for you, this will help you breathe.

Self-Compassion

“First breathe in compassion for yourself, and then breathe out compassion for others”

There are two sides to compassion, compassion for others (which is what we tend to focus on most) and compassion for ourselves (which is what we tend to ignore and do last).

Having compassion for yourself means that you honour your humanness. It will not always be easy, it will not always go the way you want, planned or imagined. You will encounter frustrations, losses, make mistakes, bump up against your limitations and fall short of your ideals. This is human nature – we all experience this as a reality.

The more you open your heart to the reality instead of constantly fighting against it – the more you will feel compassion for yourself – in short “Give yourself a break!”

Self-compassion is not self-pity

Self-compassion is not self-indulgence

You are not failing, you are not selfish, and you are not bad at this!

You may feel in a place at the moment where you can't see how this will help you, or you may feel at the moment that you can't manage to do any of this and that's ok.

These are suggestions and hints to start you thinking about what might be possible for you. If you are not ready, store this away until you are. If you already do some of these things then great, there might be some new ideas for you to try or if you are ready to try then we hope these ideas can help you on the way.

Two important things before you start; don't compare yourself to others, one size does not fit all, you are all individuals - you do you!

Do what works for you and don't worry about anyone else, if you find just one thing that helps you then that is a huge achievement and a step in the right direction

Goal Setting

Setting goals for yourself is a way to fuel your self care. It is about giving yourself the inspiration necessary to aim for things you didn't think were possible.

Here are some tips on setting realistic goals that you can achieve;

- Focus on one goal at a time. Too often the biggest mistake it to try and do too much at once, or feel under pressure to do many things at once. Pick **ONE** thing you are going to crush.... and crush it!
- Make it your own
- Make it measurable, be specific and set a time to it. This allows you to track your progress, the more specific your goal, the clearer the path is to achieving it; e.g. I am going to take 5 mins, 3 days per week before I get in the shower to run through a guided meditation on an app on my phone and I want to achieve this by the end of the month. By identifying a time to do it by creates an sense of urgency which will help you focus and achieve your goal
- Remember that lasting changes take a while
- Set the bar low – at least at first – to ensure you start out with some all important wins
- Be flexible in your definition of success, Though it is important to set your goal, it is also important to give yourself permission to alter or change it as you go

First Steps

As we discussed during the Empty Cup on line session there are lots of different options when it comes to self-care and choosing to do something for you. The list below is not exhaustive; if you don't find something you like here, please choose an alternative that works for you;

Going for a walk

Exercising

Cooking or Baking

Singing or listening to music

Watching your favourite TV programme or film

Knitting or sewing

Talking to others who understand

Joining support groups on Facebook

Meditation or Mindfulness

Yoga

Having a nice shower, putting on your make up

Face pack

Reading

Writing or Poetry

Photography

Two minutes of silence on your own

Sitting with your pets

Dancing

Pick one thing – making a start

Choose one of the activities from the list above or an alternative that you want and write it down on a post it note or a piece of paper and stick somewhere where you will see it every day – at the side of your mirror, on the fridge, in your purse or at the side of your bed and when you catch sight of it use it to inspire and remind you to do something for you.

Filling up your cup

- **Sit with your thoughts and feelings – feel them**
- **Be kind to yourself – sign your own permission slip**
- **Self-care and Self Compassion (what helps you breathe?)**
- **Connect with others – find your people**
- **Do something for you, do something you love**
- **Take notice – be present - find the joy**



Sign your own Permission Slip

- You are allowed to say “This is hard”
- You are allowed to be angry or frustrated
- You are allowed to lose your temper
- You are allowed to scream out loud
- You are allowed to cry in the shower or late at night in the dark
- You are allowed to lie in bed a little longer and think you can’t do this again today
- You are allowed to want to run away or give up – doesn’t mean you will, but it is natural to think it sometimes

Permission Slip

I _____ give myself
permission to: _____

Being Present – Finding the Joy

When life is hard, busy and complicated and you are tired and in survival mode it can be difficult to be “present” in your life. You can focus so much on getting through each day that you don’t notice what is going on around you and you essentially “miss” parts of your life happening. It is extremely difficult to always be present in a moment and it can take practice and perseverance to do so, but trying it could be life changing for you.



When you find yourself laughing, smiling, having a good moment either with the person you care for or other people around you, **stop**, just for a moment, recognise how it makes you feel and what is going on around you, what are other people’s facial expressions like, what are they saying or conveying to you. What has connected you at this point? Really feel it and store it away (maybe write it down or record it on your phone) and when you have a tough day or a day when you feel like you can’t see the light at the end of the tunnel, reach for the feelings and thoughts you had on those days and let it help you through.

Leading on from this is the choice you make to “Find the Joy” in each day. This can also be very tough on any given day and your motivation to do so may be lacking, but choosing to find some joy, even something small and simple, in your day will help to fill your cup for those days when you need it.

Create a “joy journal” either on in a notebook or diary or even on your phone. Have it by your bedside and either every day when you wake up or before you go to bed, note down 3 things you were joyful or grateful for in that day, it can be something simple like a nice cup of coffee or a chat with your friend, hearing a song you love on the radio – whatever you want to put down works. There can be points in your day, even amongst the really rough and tough days were there are nuggets of joy – choose to find them and write them down, they will be your joy when you need them.

Mindfulness in everyday activity – “I don’t have time”

Finding the time to do something for you is a real worry, when can you fit in some “me time”? Think about doing this in everyday activities, how many of us take a shower in the morning and don’t ever pay attention to what we are doing? We all just go through the routine as an automatic process but what if we used this time to be present and mindful. Next time you get in the shower think – What does the water feel like on your skin? What does your shower gel smell like, what colour is it? What kind of tiles or paint do you have on the walls – take the time to soak all of that in whilst having your shower.

When you make a cup of tea or coffee – again how many of us just go through the automatic actions and don’t think about it. Next time you make a cup think; what colour is my cup or mug? Listen to the sound of the water boiling and bubbling up, what does your drink taste like or feel like on your tongue and in your mouth as you take a sip?

By doing this at the same time as an everyday activity you are taking 5 mins or so to be mindful and present and calm your thoughts. This is really beneficial and particularly good if you are really busy and struggling to find time for you. This method can be applied to any activity, alternatively you can look up guided mindfulness or meditation videos on You Tube of varying time lengths that suit you or download one of the many apps to your phone, grab your headphones and let your mind relax.

30 Second Dance Party

If you struggle to find time to do things for yourself and are looking for a quick activity then there is nothing better than a 30 second dance party. You can do this anytime, anywhere, whenever you want. You can do it on your own, with the person you care for and/or family and friends. You can do it sitting down or standing up, inside or outside, even with your headphones on so only you hear your song.



If you are having a rough day, feeling tired, stuck, demotivated and struggling. Pick a favourite song, play on your phone, computer, CD player, Radio or Record Player and just dance like no one is watching for 30 seconds. Throw your arms about, twirl in circles, move those hips, anything you like as long as you are moving. 30 seconds is all it takes or you can keep going for the entire song. One song is all it takes; it will energise you, get you moving and hopefully fill you with some happiness and give you some motivation to keep going

Short Breathing Exercises

4-7-8 Technique

Exhale completely through your mouth, making a whoosh sound. Close your mouth and inhale quietly through your nose to a mental count of **4**. Hold your breath for a count of **7**. Exhale completely through your mouth, making a whoosh sound to a count of **8**.

Calming Breath

1. Take a long, slow breath in through your nose, first filling your lower lungs, then your upper lungs.
2. Hold your breath to the count of "three."
3. Exhale slowly through pursed lips, while you relax the muscles in your face, jaw, shoulders, and stomach.

Final Thought

THINGS TO REMEMBER

You don't have to be perfect

Having a bad day is ok

Small steps are also progress

Asking for help is strength

People love and appreciate you

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Getting In Touch

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