

ACTIVITY INSTRUCTIONS AND HANDOUTS



LIST OF ACTIVITIES

Things to be Thankful for Today

Common Ground

How Would You Treat a Friend?

I'm ___% present today, the rest of me is ____.

Soothing Kit

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Saving Sami

Using Compassion to Confront a Difficult Situation we Avoid

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Things to be Thankful for Today

This gratitude activity asks students to identify at least one thing they are thankful for each class session. The main goal of the activity is to integrate gratitude into the class sessions and help students focus on the positive things in their life. A secondary benefit is that this activity facilitates a classroom environment that encourages sharing and connection between classmates as well as the instructor.

- Invite students to write down at least one thing they are thankful for that day at the beginning of each class session.
- Students can write on an index card and use a magnet to post it on the magnetic white board; students can write on Post-It Notes that could be posted on the whiteboard/chalkboard; or students could write directly onto the whiteboard/chalkboard. Having students share it on the whiteboard/chalkboard is useful in that it helps to make the activity visible to all and often students like to read what other students have written.
- This activity integrates gratitude into our class sessions and helps students to focus on positive things in their life.
- You can introduce this activity on the first day of class with this script:
- "We will be learning in this course about how our brains have evolved to notice negative or potentially harmful aspects of our environment. While this is functional to a certain extent, it can lead to negative consequences for our psychological and physical health. When we strengthen our ability to identify positive things in our lives, things we are thankful for, things that make us happy, even small things that went 'right', we can train our brain to focus more on the positive. This can result in many beneficial outcomes.
- Each day at the beginning of class, I'd like you to write down something you are thankful for that day on an index card, put your name and date on the back, and then put it up on the whiteboard."

- It is useful if the instructor also participates in this activity and at least occasionally shares what they are thankful for that day.
- Students will quickly get used to doing this activity immediately upon entering the classroom if the instructor incorporates it each class and has the materials available. There is a PowerPoint slide for this activity located at the beginning of each lecture so it can be shown as students enter the room and be a cue to remind students to complete the activity.
- The instructor can review what students have written and identify themes (e.g., being thankful for important people; good weather) and can share the themes they've noticed and ask for additional explanation. For example, "I noticed that several of you wrote about being thankful for the great weather we are having this week. Does anyone want to share more about this?"
- It is helpful to always leave 3-5 minutes at the start of the class to ask if anyone wants to share what they are thankful for today. This helps reinforce the gratitude goals of the activity and has an added benefit of encouraging students to share with their classmates, which facilitates them getting to know each other. Often these discussions lead to students sharing things they may be struggling with and acts of compassion that others have shown them and additionally results in other students reacting supportively.
- An optional activity is to hand back the index cards to students about halfway through the course and encourage students to review what they have chosen to identify any patterns that they might notice.
- In an online course, this can be done as an individual journal assignment or as an online discussion that was kept open and added to daily or weekly throughout the duration of the course.

Things to *be Thankful* for Today

Our brains have evolved to notice negative or potentially harmful aspects of our environment. While this is functional to a certain extent, it can lead to negative consequences for our psychological and physical health.

When we strengthen our ability to identify positive things in our lives -- things we are thankful for, things that make us happy, even small things that went 'right' -- we can train our brain to focus more on the positive. This gratitude practice can result in many beneficial outcomes.

Write down at least one thing that you are thankful for today.



Common Ground

This ice-breaker activity facilitates students getting to know each other at the beginning of a course. It helps students to recognize that they may likely have more in common with one another than they initially anticipated. Because it is done first in small groups, it tends to be more comfortable than some ice-breaker activities which require students to speak in front of the whole class.

- Before this activity, assign each student a number 1 to 5. We created a bookmark for each student that had their number on it. These bookmark numbers can be used to divide students into groups (e.g., all students with the same number should form a group) of about 5 or 6 students per group.
- Each group should be given one handout for this assignment.
- Have students complete the Common Ground ice-breaker activity in their group.
- Students should come up with 10 things that they all have in common (avoiding overly obvious similarities such as 'we are all students at this school', 'we are all human')
- Walk around the classroom and assist groups who appear to be struggling.
- After all groups have finished, discuss as a whole class, asking each group to share. Depending on the size of your class and how many groups you have, you may have time for each group to share all 10 of their identified commonalities, or you may ask each group to share one to three commonalities they identified.
- It can also be interesting to ask students what they noticed through doing this activity and/or what they found most interesting or surprising.
- In an online course, this activity can be done as an online discussion. In most cases, it would be useful to put students into smaller groups to facilitate the process.

COMMON GROUND



Come up with 10 things that you all have in common

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

How Would You Treat a Friend?

This self-compassion activity introduces the concept that many of us are more compassionate and gentler to a friend who is suffering than we are to ourselves in times of distress or suffering. By asking ourselves how we would treat a friend, we can recognize the differences in the way we treat a friend and the way to we treat ourselves. It can be a first step toward understanding self-compassion. This self-compassion activity was originally created by Kristin Neff.

- This is an activity that is initially done individually and then can be discussed as a whole class.
- Ask students to put their name on the top of the handout page and then proceed with the activity as it is described on the handout.
- Discuss this as a whole class. Ask students if they treat friends differently than they treat themselves in similar situations and if so why they think they do this. Encourage them to consider what it might be like if they treated themselves more like they would treat a friend.
- In an online course, this activity can be done as an individual assignment or as an online discussion where students completed the activity and then shared what they wrote and their insights from it.

HOW WOULD YOU TREAT A FRIEND?

As we're learning, developing compassion for ourselves can be far more challenging than cultivating a sense of compassion for others. With some practice, we can learn to grow in our ability to treat ourselves with more compassion and reach a balance between self-acceptance and self-improvement. One effective starting place is through this exercise: treating yourself like a good friend.

It is easy to give our friends love, compassion, and understanding, even when they fail or make a mistake. Let's practice extending this same understanding and compassion to ourselves when we make a mistake...

1

First, think about a time when a close friend seemed to feel badly about themselves or was really struggling in some way. How would you respond to your friend in this situation (especially when you're at your best)? Please write down what you typically do, what you say, and note the tone in which you typically talk to your friends.

2

Now think about a time when you have felt badly about yourself or are struggling. How do you typically respond to yourself in these situations? Please write down what you typically do, what you say, and note the tone in which you talk to yourself.

3

Did you notice a difference? If so, ask yourself why. What factors or fears come into play that lead you to treat yourself and a close friend so differently?

4

Please write down how you think things might change if you responded to yourself in the same way you typically respond to a close friend when you're suffering.



Why not try
TREATING
YOURSELF
like a
GOOD FRIEND
and see what
happens?

I'm _____% present today, the
rest of me is _____.

This quick activity helps students consider where their attention is focused and allows students to be aware that we often are not fully (100%) mentally present. The activity encourages them to notice what thoughts might be pulling them away from the present moment and the present situation.

- Ask students to write down what % they are present today and where the rest of them is.
- This helps them consider where their attention is focused.
- Feel free to invite students to share if they are comfortable and normalize the idea that it is common to not have 100% of your attention on the present moment/environment---this is what we can begin to cultivate through mindfulness activities.

I'm _____ %

*present
today,
the rest of
me is _____.*

Write down what % of your mind is present today and where the rest is focused.

This helps you consider where your attention is focused. It is common to not have 100% of your attention on the present moment/environment---this is what we can begin to cultivate through mindfulness practices.



Soothing Kit

This activity encourages students to consider what stimulates their own physiology of their soothing system. The basic idea for this activity is introduced in Chapter 9 on page 132 of the Compassionate Mind Workbook. The activity asks students to consider what they would put into a soothing kit. Students are encouraged to consider all of their senses as well as mindfulness practices to identify what they find soothing. The soothing kit can be thought of as a self-compassion soothing kit because its goal is to have items in it that the person finds soothing and relaxing and therefore may use in times of distress.

- The following instructions can be shared with students:
- “This soothing kit should be created with care and thoughtfulness to be personalized to you. What effectively soothes one person, may not work for another. Spending time considering what helps to stimulate the physiology of your soothing system can help you in the future to know how to soothe yourself. You can also share this information with friends, family, and other loved ones so that they may be able to use this information to help soothe you.
- Explore and identify items that are soothing to you by considering all your senses (smell, sound, sight, taste, touch). Additionally consider if there are any mindfulness/meditation practices or other activities that you find soothing. If so, please include some representation of these as well.
- Create a soothing kit for yourself that contains at least 5 items. Bring to class some type of physical representation of your Self-Compassion Soothing kit. You can bring in the actual items (e.g., a candle that has a smell you find soothing/relaxing), or you can bring in a photo or drawing of the items (e.g., a photo of a favorite person who soothes/calms you). You do not need to include all 5 of your senses but try to include at least 3 or 4 senses. Including a mindfulness/meditation practice is optional.”
- Ask students to share what they put in their Soothing Kit. Students can be put into small groups or it can be done as a full class discussion.
- In an online course, this activity can be done as an online discussion. Students can create their soothing kit and share pictures and descriptions of the items they selected. Then students can share this in an online discussion so students can discuss.



Compassion Soothing Kit

The students created this Soothing Kit especially for you. Each item included was selected with the intention of hopefully being soothing to you in some way.

Earlier in the semester, each student in the Cultivating Compassion course created their own personal Self-Compassion Soothing Kit. The purpose of this activity was to help them explore what helped stimulate the physiology of their soothing system. By learning how to activate their soothing system, they can increase their ability to act compassionately to themselves and others. For their soothing kits they collected items that were soothing to all of their senses (smell, sound, sight, taste, touch). Additionally, students identified mindfulness meditation practices that we have done in class that they found were soothing.

Items in your soothing kit

- 1 **Compassion Hearts** - Students in both the Cultivating Compassion and Embracing Empathy courses shared a compassion heart with you. This jar of compassion hearts is a physical representation of caring from the students.
- 2 **Candle** - We felt that the scent of this eucalyptus-mint candle as well as the flickering light of the candle burning would be soothing and relaxing.
- 3 **Lip Balm** - Many students shared that they found it soothing to their sense of touch and smell to put on lip balm and this cucumber mint was a favorite among the students.
- 4 **Chocolate** - In addition to tasting great, dark chocolate can have health benefits. Chocolate was a favorite item to include in several students' soothing kits.
- 5 **Play doh** - The process of kneading the play doh in your hands can be quite relaxing. Some students also said that the smell of play doh reminded them of happy childhood memories. After discussing this in class one day, several of the students began using play doh as a soothing tool and thought it would be fun to include in your soothing kit.
- 6 **Frog** - We heard you like frogs and thought that this super soft and cute frog would be a great addition to your soothing kit.

What's Good About...?

This activity helps give us perspective and encourages us to realize that even in difficult situations, it is still possible to identify positive aspects of the situation. In the activity students are given a folded piece of paper with a seemingly negative situation and the student is challenged to identify as many positive things as possible about this situation in 60 seconds.

Prompts: What's good about...?

- When someone is unfriendly to you.
- When you are broke.
- Lying in bed for a week with the flu.
- When a romantic relationship ends.
- When you are stuck in traffic because there was an accident up ahead.
- When you don't earn the grade you were expecting/hoping for on an exam.

Instructions to students

- "Get into groups of 2 students. One student should open their slip of paper and read it out loud to your partner. Name as many positive things as possible about this situation in 60 seconds. Then it's your partner's turn to open their slip of paper, read it out loud and then name as many positive things as possible in 60 seconds about their situation."
- Then as a full class, discuss students' reflections on this activity including how they might experience the situation differently if they were more likely to recognize the positive aspects. For example, the amount of time you are stuck in traffic will remain the same, but if you focus on the negative aspects (e.g., being late to your destination) you may be left feeling very frustrated and tense, while if you focus on the positive aspects (e.g., you were not involved in the accident) you may feel grateful and more relaxed.
- In an online course this activity can be done as an online discussion. Students can be given the option to select one of the seemingly negative situations and then can write as many positive things about the situation as they can come up with. Then students can discuss their reflections on this activity.

What's good about...?



Choose a scenario and then come up with as many **positive** things about the scenario as you can in 60 seconds.

When someone is unfriendly to you.

When you are broke.

Lying in bed for a week with the flu.

When a romantic relationship ends.

When you are stuck in traffic because there was an accident up ahead.

The Mud and the Lotus

This activity involves reading the story of the mud and the lotus and facilitating a discussion with students about their reaction and interpretation of the story. This facilitates a better understanding of the nature of compassion and enables students to use the suffering or difficult experiences that come with being human (symbolized by the mud) to cultivate our compassion and understanding (symbolized by the lotus).

- Read the story of the mud and the lotus (see below) to students and then ask them to share their reaction to the story and its ideas. For instance: Does it change the way you think about suffering or compassion? How does it help you better understand the nature of compassion?
- In an online course, this story can be shared with students and then students can discuss their reaction in an online discussion.

According to myth, the seed of compassion lies dormant beneath the mud of the lake. It may have lain there for an entire lifetime, completely hidden and ignored. It represents our capacity to transform our own lives and the lives of many others and have a huge impact on the world. The mud represents our darker side – all those difficult, troublesome desires and emotions that afflict us on a daily basis, such as anger, jealousy, shame and pride. It also represents our tendencies toward selfishness and neurosis that limit and preoccupy us. This is the stuff that we may want to get rid of, but this is not so easy because these emotions are part of our evolved minds. The lake symbolizes the depths of the psyche and the surface of the lake, the boundary between our unconscious experience and our conscious lives.

Now, according to the myth, what activates the seed beneath the mud and starts the process of germination is the force of compassionate motivation, namely the wish to open our hearts to the suffering of ourselves and others, and to engage with this suffering. We need to be willing to go there to enable the seed to germinate. In fact, we can think of our minds as having many potential seeds that can be germinated by different social conditions and motives. We can grow the seeds of violence and tribal hatred, if we so choose. To do the opposite is our responsibility as human beings, as we wake up to the fact that our brains are much more malleable than we may have realized and we can make choices about what we want to cultivate in ourselves. In choosing to cultivate our compassionate selves, however, we begin the process of transforming the destructive emotions and, indeed, our lives.

In the beginning, perhaps all we might know is that we are suffering and that others are suffering too. But as soon as we choose to move toward the pain not away from it, something is touched and begins to grow within us. According to the myth, the seedling of compassion, which is the lotus flower shoot, starts to sprout; and, as we continue to practice mindfulness and compassion it grows and finally breaks the surface of the lake. Now, although it has grown out of the mud, at the point when it blooms and breaks the surface of the lake, it is completely untainted by the mud, and symbolizes the mind that opens out to the world with love and compassion.

An important part of this myth is that the lotus flower cannot exist without the mud because the mud is the manure that feeds the plant and enables it to grow. Without suffering, there is nothing to be compassionate about. This allows us to step out of shame and avoidance and to see that the difficult parts of ourselves are the very manure of transformation; so we do not need to get rid of them (and nor can we) but we can acknowledge instead that they are a source of power. In this way we can see that the awakening of compassion can sometimes depend upon the dark and difficult parts of ourselves.

Consequently, compassion is born within the depths of our being. It arises as a deep stirring beneath the mud of our everyday mind. What stirs it is the force of motivation and commitment to engage with our pain and the pain of others. But while it is important to descend and make contact with the mud, it is also important to bear in mind that the key element of compassion are the emotions of kindness and friendliness and the genuine desire to alleviate suffering. These arise from the sense that we are all in it together, and through acknowledging the links of affiliation to everything that lives. (Gilbert & Choden, 2014, pp. 177-179).

Compassion Hearts

In this activity, polymer clay is used to create compassion hearts. Clay compassion hearts can be used as physical representations to show your care and compassion for another or as a way to facilitate self-compassion. The hearts can be given to others who might be having a hard day or kept for yourself in your pocket/purse to help remind you to show yourself self-compassion. They could also be used as random acts of kindness. Additionally, they could be used as a physical anchor to hold during mindfulness practices.

Supplies needed:

- polymer clay (e.g., Sculpey III)
- rolling pin or other cylindrical object (e.g., a marker can work)
- mini clay heart-shaped cutter (or you can mold these into heart shapes with your hands)
- wax or parchment paper
- metal or glass bakeware
- oven to bake according to clay directions

Clay Marbling Technique:

- Wash your hands to avoid transferring any lint onto the clay
 - Use wax or parchment paper to work on to keep the clay clean
 - Select two or more colors of clay
 - Cut small pieces of each color of clay (maybe an 1/8 of package)
 - "Condition" each color of clay separately by hand for a couple minutes to get it soft
 - Roll each color of clay into a long, skinny snake-shape using your hands
 - Twist the snakes together into one piece and then roll it into one long snake with your hands
 - Bend the snake together and twist again. Then roll into a long snake-shape again.
 - Continue this process until you are happy with the design in your clay.
 - Roll your clay into a ball
 - Using a rolling tool, roll your marbled clay until it is 1/8 to 1/4 inch thick
 - Use a mini heart-shaped cutter to cut out hearts
 - Bake in your oven according to the directions on your polymer clay packaging
- During the next class session, ask students what their plans are for how they will use these compassion hearts.
 - In an online course, this can be shared as an optional activity.



What are they?

- These clay compassion hearts are physical representations of compassion. A heart can be given to someone you notice is having a hard day or is struggling in some way or you can keep a heart for yourself in your pocket/purse to help remind you to show yourself self-compassion. They could also be shared with others as random acts of kindness.



Supplies needed:

- Polymer clay (e.g., Sculpey III)
- Rolling pin
- Mini clay heart-shaped cutter (or you can mold these into heart shapes with your hands)
- Wax or parchment paper
- Metal or glass bakeware
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Clay Marbling Technique

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- 7 Twist the snakes together into one piece and then roll it into one long snake with your hands
- 8 Bend the snake together and twist again. Then roll into a long snake.
- 9 Continue this process until you are happy with the design in your clay.
- 10 Using a rolling tool, roll your marbled clay until it is 1/8 to 1/4 inch thick
- 11 Use a mini heart-shaped cutter to cut out hearts
- 12 Bake in your oven according to the directions on your polymer clay packaging

Post-it Notes

This activity invites students to write and share positive, encouraging messages on Post-it Notes (sticky notes). These positive post-it notes can be written for a specific person who may be struggling as an act of compassion, for the student themselves as an act of self-compassion, or as a random act of kindness for whoever find the notes.

- Hand out several Post-it Notes to students so they can write positive and encouraging messages and leave them for others or for themselves.
- These positive post-it notes can be acts of compassion for others, can be acts of self-compassion, or can be used as random acts of kindness.
- During the next class session, ask students who they shared these positive Post-it Notes with and what the reaction was.
- In an online course, you can invite students to create and distribute positive Post-it Notes and then discuss in an online discussion what they wrote, for whom did they write them, and what was the reaction.



*You Are
Awesome!*

Positive Post-It Notes

Notes of positivity and encouragement

Leave notes for others

Leave notes for yourself



Naming Your Critical Mind

This activity helps students to identity their critical inner voice and explore the impact that it has on them as well as their experience of themselves and the world. This is a diffusion exercise in that by giving their critical mind a name other than their own, it gives students the opportunity to create some distance between their critical mind with its associated thoughts and themselves. This exercise also gives students an opportunity to better understand the motives of their critical mind and allows them to show themselves compassion.

This activity is best assigned to be done outside of class and then discussed the following class session.

- Introduce the activity and share the handout the class session prior to discussing it to allow student some time to think about this. Ask students to come to class prepared with their critical mind's name and the answers to the questions on the handout.
- The in-class discussion can be done first in small groups of 2-4 students and then in a full class discussion or simply beginning with a full class discussion.
 - It is helpful if the instructor completes this activity and shares their critical mind's name and characteristics either on the day they introduce the activity or prior to asking students to share.
- In an online course, this activity can be shared with students and then students can discuss their reaction in an online discussion.

HELLO

My name is



Naming Your Critical Mind

I invite you to do an exercise to explore your critical mind (also known as your “inner critic” or “self-critic”) and give your critical mind a name. It is very common to have an internal critical voice. For some of us, our critical mind is quite vocal and active, for others it is quiet much of the time.

This is a diffusion exercise in that it gives you the opportunity to create some distance between your critical mind with its associated thoughts and yourself – thoughts are not facts. This exercise also gives you an opportunity to better understand the motives of your critical mind and allows you to show yourself compassion.

By giving your critical mind a name that is not your own, it allows you to recognize it as distinct. You want to avoid having a hostile relationship with your mind, because it will always be with you. So when you are selecting a name for your mind, you likely will not want to select a name you hate. However, select a name that ‘fits’ your critical mind and its unique qualities.

Notice the presence of your critical mind and answer the questions below.

- * What is your critical mind's name?
- * Explain why you chose this name.
- * Share characteristics of your critical mind:
 - What are the things that your critical mind says? (*Your critical mind might use absolutes “always”/”never”.*)
 - Consider how your body feels when your critical mind is active.
 - Why is your critical mind doing this?
 - What is the effect that your critical mind is trying to achieve?

Investigate Obstructive Thoughts

This activity is based on a process called The Work by Bryon Katie. It is a way to inquire your thoughts and bring openness and curiosity to them. It helps with the process of letting go thoughts that are obstructive.

- Ask students to complete this individually, writing their answers down.
 - Choose one limiting belief or thought.
 - Next ask yourself the following questions:
 - Is it true? (Yes or No, if No then move to 3.)
 - Can you absolutely know that it is true?
 - How do you react, what happens, when you believe that thought?
 - Who would you be without that thought?
- Come together as a whole class and discuss students' reactions to this process and if they found it to be helpful.
- In an online course, this could be done as an individual assignment or in an online discussion.

The Criticizer, the Criticized, and the Compassionate Other

This self-compassion activity was originally created by Kristin Neff and was inspired by the two-chair dialogue. It gives the student the opportunity to take on the roles and perspectives of the criticizer, the criticized as well as the compassionate observer. This activity facilitates the student to gain insight into the different perspectives and enables them to refocus their thoughts and feelings on being supportive and caring toward themselves.

This activity is best assigned to be done outside of class and then discussed the following class session.

- Pass out the handout and ask students to complete it individually outside of class by the next class session.
- The in-class discussion can be done first in small groups of 2-4 students and then in a full class discussion or simply beginning with a full class discussion.
- In an online course, this activity can be assigned to students to be done individually and then students can discuss their reaction in an online discussion.

THE CRITICIZER, THE CRITICIZED, AND THE COMPASSIONATE OBSERVER

As we are learning, self-compassion encourages us to acknowledge our flaws and limitations, allowing us to look at ourselves from a more objective and realistic point of view. Rather than getting down on yourself for making a mistake, or holding a pity party when you encounter difficulty, self-compassion involves taking a kind – but realistic – view of your experience. Accordingly, self-compassionate people tend to improve on mistakes, failures, or shortcomings because they are able to view them more objectively. Let's practice moving from self-criticism to that of a wise, compassionate observer...

In this exercise, you will sit in different chairs to help get in touch with different, often conflicting parts of yourself, experiencing how each aspect feels in the present moment.



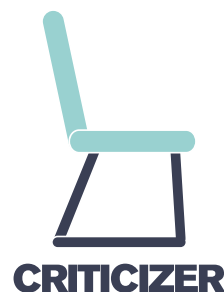
To begin, put out three empty chairs, preferably in a triangular arrangement. Next, think about an issue that often troubles you, and that often elicits harsh self-criticism. Designate one chair as the voice of your inner self-critic, one chair as the voice of the part of you that feels judged and criticized, and one chair as the voice of a wise, compassionate observer. You are going to be role-playing all three parts of yourself – you, you, and you. It may feel a bit silly at first, but you may be surprised at what comes out once you really start letting your feelings flow freely!



1 Think about your “issue,” and then sit in the chair of the self-critic.

As you take your seat, express out loud what the self-critical part of you is thinking and feeling. For example, “I hate that fact that you’re such a wimp and aren’t self-assertive.”

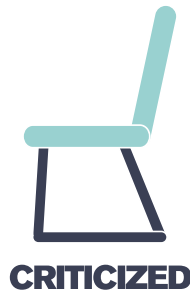
Notice the words and tone of voice the self-critical part of you uses, and also how it is feeling. Worried, angry, self-righteous, exasperated? Note what your body posture is like. Strong, rigid, upright? What emotions are coming up for you right now?



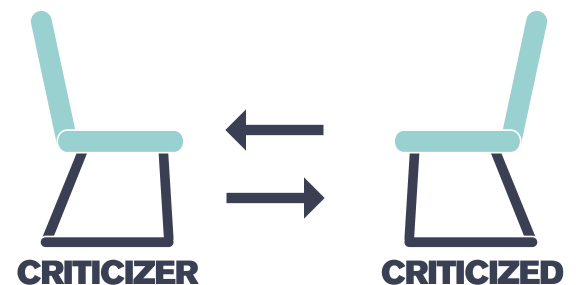
2**Take the chair of the criticized aspect of yourself.**

Try to get in touch with how you feel being criticized in this manner. Then verbalize how you feel, responding directly to your inner critic. For example, “I feel so hurt by you” or “I feel so unsupported.”

Just speak whatever comes into your mind. Again, notice the tone of your voice? Is it sad, discouraged, childlike, scared, helpless? What is your body posture like? Are you slumped, downward facing, frowning?

**3****Conduct a dialogue between these two parts of yourself for a while, switching back and forth between the chair of the criticizer and the criticized.**

Really try to experience each aspect of yourself so each knows how the other feels. Allow each to fully express its views and be heard. This may require you to sit with discomfort as you notice and allow space for each aspect of yourself to express and be acknowledged.

**4****Now occupy the chair of the compassionate observer.**

Call upon your deepest wisdom, the wells of your caring concern, and address both the critic and the criticized. What does your compassionate self say to the critic, what insight does it have? For example, “You sound very much like your mother” or, “I see that you’re really scared, and you’re trying to help me so I don’t mess up.” What does your compassionate self say to the criticized part of yourself? For example, “It must be incredibly difficult to hear such harsh judgment day after day. I see that you’re really hurting” or “All you want is to be accepted for who you are.”

Try to relax, letting your heart soften and open. What words of compassion naturally spring forth? What is the tone of your voice? Tender, gentle, warm? What is your body posture like – balanced, centered, relaxed?

**5****After the dialogue finishes (stop whenever it feels right), reflect upon what just happened.**

Do you have any new insights into how you treat yourself, where your patterns come from, new ways of thinking about the situation that are more productive and supportive?

As you think about what you have learned, set your intention to relate to yourself in a kinder, healthier way in the future. A truce can be called in your inner war. Peace is possible. Your old habits of self-criticism don't need to rule you forever. Listening to the voice that's already there, even if a bit hidden – your wise, compassionate self – can help as you continue practicing how to take a more self-compassionate approach.

Saving Sami

This activity not only requires teamwork and communication, but it also may cause feelings of frustration or anxiety for some students. The feelings of frustration and anxiety may be exacerbated if there is a time limit or competition between groups for which group can finish first. The goal for this course is that this helps illustrate that in order to act compassionately to save Sami, you must use tolerate frustration and use compassionate wisdom. The activity was originally created as a team-building activity for school-age children and teens; however, it works well with college students as well.

- Approximately 15 minutes is needed for this activity to allow time for instructions, completion, and discussion of experience.
- This activity not only requires teamwork and communication, but it also may cause feelings of frustration or anxiety for some students. This could be exacerbated if it is timed or a competition between groups. The goal for this class is that this helps illustrate that in order to act compassionately to save Sami, you must use compassionate wisdom, and tolerate frustration.
- Get students into groups of 3 students. Once you've passed out supplies and gone over instructions, set a timer for 5 minutes (this helps to increase the sense of urgency and potential frustration). Then announce that whatever team saves Sami first 'wins' but allow teams to work until the timer goes off.

Materials required per small group:

- Gummy worm = Sami the worm
- Gummy lifesaver = Sami's life jacket
- Clear plastic cup = Sami's boat
- Drink stir stick = boat oar
- 2 small paperclips
- A table/desk to work on = the water

Set-up of the materials:

- Gummy worm = Sami the worm
- Gummy lifesaver = Sami's life jacket
- Clear plastic cup = Sami's boat
- Drink stir stick = boat oar
- 2 small paperclips
- A table/desk to work on = the water

Instructions for students:

- Sami's boat capsized and Sami can't swim. Sami's life jacket is under the boat and Sami's boat oar has fallen into the water.
- Help save Sami by doing the following
 - Flip the boat over
 - Put Sami's life jacket on
 - Get Sami inside the boat
 - Lay the oar across the top of the boat
 - You can only touch the paperclips but can use the paperclips to touch/move/adjust all of the other items.
 - Don't hurt Sami or the life jacket (e.g., don't poke them with the paperclips).
 - If Sami touches the water without the life jacket on, you have to start over.
 - The first team to finish, wins!

Process this activity in a full class discussion afterward.

- Discuss how this activity felt, if they experienced any frustration or anxiety and if so why and what strategies did they use to tolerate these feelings.

Saving Sam

Sam's boat capsized. He can't swim and his life jacket is under the boat. Work together to save Sam by doing the following:

- Flip the boat over
- Put Sam's life jacket on
- Get Sam inside the boat
- Lay his oar across the top of the boat



• You can only touch the paperclips

• Don't hurt Sam or his life jacket

• If Sam touches the water without his life jacket on, you have to start over

Using Compassion to Confront a Difficult Situation we Avoid

This activity facilitates students' ability to see how a compassionate approach can be used to help them analyze and engage with a situation that they typically would avoid. The activity also gives them the opportunity to show themselves self-compassion as well as have a classmate show them compassion regarding this situation.

Begin by having students individually address these questions.

- Select 1 thing you feel nervous about and tend to avoid.
 - What are your safety/avoidance strategies?
 - What are you afraid might happen?
 - Express compassion to yourself.
 - What is at least 1 step you could take toward facing this thing you avoid?
- Next, have students find a partner to create a group of two.

Have students discuss with their partner:

- 1 thing you avoid
 - Avoidance strategies you use
 - What you are afraid of
 - **Allow your partner to express compassion**
 - Identify 1 step toward facing it
- In an online course, this could be done as an online discussion.

Self-Compassionate Letter

In this activity, students are invited to write a compassionate letter to themselves with the goals of 1) expressing concern, non-judgment, and genuine caring to themselves; 2) demonstrating sensitivity to their pain and suffering; 3) helping them to be more tolerant of their distress; and 4) helping them to understand and have empathy for their struggles.

- Invite students to complete this activity individually outside of class and come prepared with it to the next class session.
- Letter writing is another way we can engage with our compassionate self to show ourselves self-compassion. Writing about things that we struggle with can help us process and better understand them and ultimately have a positive effect on our psychological and physical health.
- There are various ways that a compassionate letter can be approached. Some individuals prefer to write a letter to themselves either in the first person or the second person point of view, while others find it easiest to write the letter from the perspective of a beloved friend writing to you. Select which option feels best.
- Most often, it is recommended that individuals identify a situation, problem, or difficulty that they are currently struggling with or have struggled with in the past to focus on in the letter. Having a circumscribed focus can facilitate the letter writing process and may assist in reducing the chances that the letter-writing process will feel overwhelming.
- Once the letter is finished, the individual should read the letter out loud to themselves.
- The in-class discussion can be focused on students' reaction to the activity rather than requiring students to share specific information included in their letter.
- In an online course, this activity can be assigned to students to be done individually and then students can discuss their reaction in an online discussion.

Multiple Selves

This activity helps students explore a few of their multiple selves (angry self, anxious self, sad self, and compassionate self). The goal is to help integrate our multiple selves into a balanced and compassionate self. In order to be able to do this, it is helpful to better understand these selves and how each may have a different perspective in certain situations.

Introduce the activity to students and give them the handout.

- We all have multiple selves, for example our angry self, anxious self, sad self, and compassionate self. This activity helps us explore a few of them. The goal is to help integrate our multiple selves into a balanced and compassionate self. In order to be able to do this, it is helpful to better understand these selves.
 - ***Think of a recent disagreement or argument you had with someone. Choose an example that is not too activating so your threat response doesn't interfere with this activity.***
 - Focus on just one of your multiple selves at a time – allow yourself to feel into this part of yourself, letting go (if you can) of any other emotions/feelings that you might have about what happened.
 - After you finish, compare identity similarities and differences – reflect on what you learned about the different parts of yourself in response to the same situation
 - Do you see any patterns?
-
- Allow students about 10 minutes to work on this activity individually.

Discuss the activity and students' insights and reactions to it as a whole group.

- A common response is the recognition that these different parts (e.g., anger, anxiety, sadness) have very different ways of looking at, thinking, and feeling about the same situation, and differ with regards to what they want and need.
- The way the different parts feel and respond (and what they want) can conflict.
- This is an important reflection because it can help us appreciate what our minds are up against, and the difficulties this can cause us.
- This can motivate us to learn how to be with all of these different selves and respond in ways that are helpful.
- This can also give us a clue about what you might need your compassionate self to help you with. For example, your compassionate self might help you moderate or keep in balance the part of you that you most readily get drawn into, and give space/allow, support, and strengthen the parts of you that you find difficult to connect with.

This discussion for this activity can be extended by asking the following questions.

- How does your compassionate self relate to your other emotional selves?
- Our compassionate self may be helpful in understanding, supporting, and guiding our other emotional selves. How do you find this to be true or not true for you?

Multiple Selves

ANGRY SELF

Motives

Thoughts

Body

Action

Memories

ANXIOUS SELF

Motives

Thoughts

Body

Action

Memories

SAD SELF

Motives

Thoughts

Body

Action

Memories

COMPASSIONATE SELF

Motives

Thoughts

Body

Action

Memories