

Exercise 1: Daily Reflection

Daily reflections can be a great way to reflect on moments throughout the day where self-compassion could have helped you. This involves thinking back throughout the day on any mistakes you made, or anything you wish you had or hadn't done and rewriting the self-criticism you may have given yourself in those moments with more compassion.

For this exercise all you need is a piece of paper and pen.

Step 1: At the end of each day, think about any mistakes you made as a parent, anything you wish you had or hadn't done. Try to be as honest as possible. And remind yourself that it's OK to be human and imperfect.

Step 2: Now try look at what you have written with self-compassion. Try to be as kind and understanding towards yourself as you would be to a good friend in a similar situation. What would you say to a friend in this situation?

Step 3: Then think about whether there's anything you can do to help repair the situation: An apology? A promise? And act of kindness? And carrying out this decision to model the process of making, then repairing mistakes.

Step 4: Finally, were there any difficult emotions underlying your behaviour, such as stress, frustration, or exhaustion? If so, give yourself compassion for your emotional pain. It's hard to be a parent. Do you think you need to make any changes to help ease your stress?

To end the self-reflection, **Decide on a couple of self-care activities. Then really do them.** It's easy as a parent to say, "I should take some time off for myself", and never actually getting around to it. Yes, you're pressed for time, but you'll be more effective and supportive as a parent by taking your own needs more seriously. It's a win-win situation all around. These self-care activities can be taking a nap in the middle of the day, or going out for dinner or coffee, listening to a soothing song, doing some stretching, taking a walk in, dancing, doing a self-compassion meditation, or just having a nice cup of tea.

Exercise 2: Self-Compassion Break

A self-compassion break is a quick and easy exercise you put into your day to help ease the stress and pressures you feel throughout the day. You don't need anything for this exercise but yourself and a few deep breathes.

When you notice self-critical thoughts, or stress and pressure mounting from the demands of the day, and you start to experience that spiral out of control. PAUSE. even just for 1 minute.

In this minute, offer yourself some kindness and understanding. Acknowledge the self-critical thoughts, or stress, and ask yourself - Can I give myself the compassion and understanding I need in this moment?

This can look like: "today spiralled out of control, but this does not mean I didn't do my best as a parent. I am doing what I can do within my capabilities and that is enough."

To end this, put your hand on your heart, and take a few deep breathes.



Exercise 3: Changing the Self-Critical Voice

This exercise should be done over several weeks. It will eventually change the blueprint for how you relate to yourself long term. Some people find it useful to work on their inner critic by writing in a journal. Others are more comfortable doing it via internal dialogues or speaking to yourself

Step 1

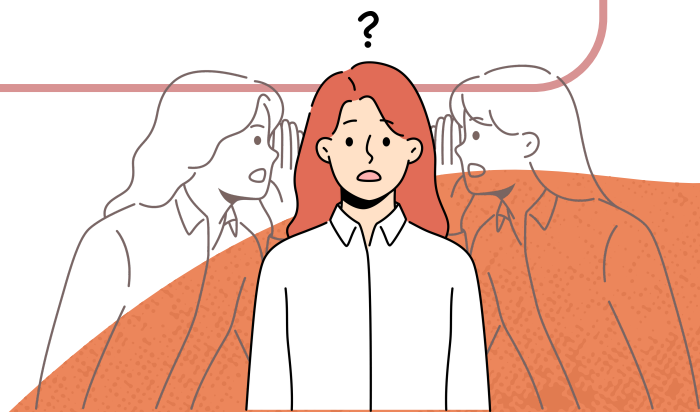
The first step to noticing how you treat yourself is to notice when you're being self-critical to yourself. The critical voice comes up so frequently that you don't even notice when it's present. Whenever you're feeling bad about something, think about what you've just said to yourself. Try to be as accurate as possible. Note everything that your inner Speech has said about yourself:

- What words do they actually use when they're using self-critical?
- Is the critical voice harsh, cold or angry?
- Does your voice remind you of anyone in your past who's critical of you?

You want to be able to get to know your inner self pretty very well to become aware of when your inner judge is active.

Step 2

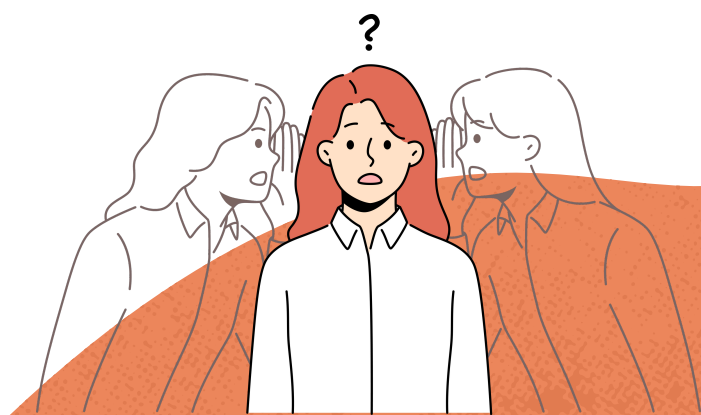
The next step is to try and soften the self-critical voice, and to do this with compassion rather than self-judgment. So rather than saying you're a horrible Parent, you could try talking to your self-critical voice and saying something like "I know you're trying to keep me safe and to do this you're pointing out what I need to improve. Harsh criticism and judgment are not helping me right now. Please stop being so critical, it's causing unnecessary pain"



Exercise 3: Changing the Self-Critical Voice

Step 3:

The final step is to reframe your observations. But in a positive way. In a more friendly way. If you're having trouble thinking of what words to use, you might want to imagine that you're trying to be compassionate to a friend in the same situation. It might help to use terms of endearment to strengthen feelings of warmth and care (like darling, hunny, dear), but only if it feels natural! So, for instance, you can say: "You are juggling so many balls just to keep this house and your family afloat. I'm in awe of what you're able to manage, and you deserve time to relax and recover". While engaging in this sort of compassionate talk, holding your hand to your heart, or holding your face tenderly. Even if you're having trouble calling up emotions of kindness at first, physical gestures can really help. The important thing is that you start acting kindly and feeding true warmth and caring for yourself.



Exercise 3: Self-Care

This is something we all often neglect, especially as parent. Remind yourself to engage in activities that nourish your mind, body, and soul, and fill your cup rather than drain it. This can include things like getting enough sleep, exercising regularly, spending enough time in nature, engaging in hobbies and interests you enjoy, or seeking support from loved ones.

While the activities above are core activities of self-care, there are smaller things you can do in your day to give yourself self-care and attention. These can include a peaceful cup of tea or coffee, 10-minutes of listening to your favourite music, a phone call with a friend, or a short walk to clear your mind.

What self-care activities can you engage in over the next few days?

To help make sure you can engage in self-care properly, try sharing your plans with others in your house or external family members so you can be supported in getting these moments of self-care.

When you engage in self-care, ask yourself how these activities have made you feel both mentally and physically.

