Being Kind to Yourself

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The Importance of Self-Kindness

Imagine that you get a phone call from your best friend and discover she's distraught. She's had a bad day, messed up something really important, or is simply worried about a pending situation.

Regardless of what's put her in this state, chances are you immediately go into comfort mode. You crack a joke to cheer her up, remind her that everyone makes mistakes (and share some of your worst ones), or you simply offer to give her a hug and a shoulder to cry on.

Whatever you choose to do, it no doubt includes a healthy dose of kindness.

Now imagine that the friend I'm talking about is actually yourself. Would you react the same way? Probably not. The truth is, when it comes ourselves we're not always as good with kindness as we are with the other people in our lives. But we should be!

Self-kindness means taking the same actions and reactions (such as empathy, understanding, and encouragement) and applying them towards ourselves as readily as we apply them towards others.

Sadly, too many of us have misconceptions when it comes to self-kindness and therefore, avoid it at all costs. Some think that it's a sign of weakness, while others think it's selfish or overly indulgent. There seems to be this idea that if we let ourselves off the hook, it will hinder us in some way in the long run. Maybe we will become spoiled or lazy.

Nothing could be further from the truth.

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Filling Your Emotional Bucket

In fact, the kinder we are to ourselves, the fuller our emotional buckets will be. When our buckets are overflowing, we have even more to offer others. This will inevitably help us become more productive, more supportive, healthier and happier in all areas of our lives.

In addition to making life lighter, self-kindness will improve our self-esteem, strengthen our self-worth, and help us realize that we are more deserving of the good things in life.

Positive change can take some time. To effectively show kindness to ourselves, we need to let go of some of our preconceived ideas and judgements. Let go of the guilt. We need to stop belittling and neglecting ourselves. We need to give ourselves permission to feel good.

Five Steps to Self-Kindness

1. **The Essentials:** Ensuring that your basic needs are met is the first step in being kind to yourself. Getting a good night's sleep, nourishing your body with good food, drinking plenty of water, and getting enough exercise are some essentials and will get you started on the right foot.
2. **The Inner Voice:** Acknowledge it. You know it's there — that little voice that likes to criticize you. Start paying attention to what it's saying and talk back. Find the exception to the thought and reframe it so that it's more accurate and supportive. Don't lie to yourself about the positives, but don't exaggerate the negatives either.
3. **Experience Emotion:** You need to allow yourself to feel what you feel without punishing yourself. Whether you are disappointed, happy, sad, angry, or whatever, feel it authentically and refrain from passing judgement on yourself.

4. **Reasonable Expectations:** Stop trying so hard to be perfect — there is no such thing! We all want to be the best we can be and should strive to do so, but setting unattainable goals is not the answer. We want to be successful, so set expectations that allow that to happen.
5. **Believe in Yourself:** It's important to have to have faith in your own abilities. Trust yourself, think highly of yourself, establish goals, and allow yourself to dream. Dreams turn into realities. Remember that everything you see around you was once just someone's thought.

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Seven Ways to Show Self-Kindness

1. **Invest in Yourself:** Seriously! Make a date with yourself every day to spend some time doing something that lifts you up and helps you get in touch with your authentic self. You might choose to draw, journal, paint, knit, read, listen to music, go for a walk, etc. Whatever you choose, make sure it is something that brings you joy.
2. **Appreciate Yourself:** Take a couple of minutes in the morning or evening to tell yourself something you appreciate about yourself. Be sure to include the small things too — the things we often take for granted. Craft your appreciation into a mantra to begin or end your day: "I am a strong, caring woman who treats others with love and respect." Accept yourself for who you are and learn to embrace your weaknesses and well as your strengths.
3. **Be Your BFF:** Whenever you stumble or something goes wrong, think about what a friend would say to support you and then talk to yourself in that same way. Allow your inner advocate to offer encouragement – just as you would offer to someone else in need.
4. **Treat Yourself:** Okay, so I'm not saying you should go on some crazy shopping spree, but every now and then treat yourself to something you really want. There is nothing wrong with giving yourself a gift for your birthday (just be sure to wrap it in pretty paper!)
5. **Pep Rally:** Whether for something good or bad, be your own cheerleader. If you accomplish something or overcome a challenge, celebrate it. If you fail or make a mistake, boost yourself with positive self-talk. Stop beating yourself up. Learn to forgive yourself for the bad things and recognize the good things.
6. **I-Messages:** These are simple, little messages you say to yourself that offer encouragement and acceptance at a moment's notice. Examples include: 'I am enough,' 'I am deserving,' or 'I am worthy.' When you are having a stressful moment, take a few minutes to breathe and recite a few I-Messages to get back on track.
7. **Sooth, Pamper and Have Fun:** Take a hot bath (include candles, oils, and soft music). Indulge in a foot, hand, or scalp massage. Have a glass of wine, hot tea, or cocoa. Take a little bit of time for yourself doing something that helps you to relax and feel good – even if it's dancing around in your underwear!

Everywhere you go and everything you do, YOU will always be there. You can be certain that the one person you will always have a relationship with is yourself.

Embracing self-kindness may be difficult at first. However, once you begin to see the improvements in your life and in your relationships, you will realize that showing self-kindness is one of the most beneficial gifts you can give to yourself.