



Self-Compassionate Letter

At times, the voice we direct inward is critical, impatient, or unforgiving. This exercise builds a different stance—one that is steady, fair, and compassionate, without avoiding responsibility or truth. The aim is not to feel better instantly, but to relate to difficulty in a way that supports growth rather than shuts it down. This can be helpful when you notice:

- Harsh self-criticism
- Shame or self-doubt
- Feeling stuck on a mistake or perceived failure
- High standards tipping into self-pressure

1. Choose a focus

Identify one situation or aspect of yourself that feels difficult right now. Keep it specific. (For example: a difficult time or experience, something that didn't go to plan, or a way you've been judging yourself.)

2. Notice your current voice

Before writing, take a moment to observe:

- What are you saying to yourself about this?
- What is the tone?

No need to change it—just notice.

3. Shift perspective

Now imagine a voice that is like a friend speaking to you. This might be someone you know, or perhaps an imaginary person. The voice acknowledges your suffering or discomfort, understands that this is part of being human, that we all suffer at times, and is able to talk to you with care and kindness.

- Understanding, not dismissive
- Honest, but not harsh
- Grounded and fair

4. Write the letter

Write a letter to yourself from this perspective. It may start with describing what has happened (the past), your thoughts and feelings about it (the present), and how you want to be or what you want to do (future).

You can use the prompts below if helpful:

- **What you've been dealing with** "This has been hard because..."
- **Understanding the context** "Given what's been happening..."
- **A shared human experience** "Many people would find this difficult..."
- **A compassionate response** "It makes sense that you feel..."
- **Support going forward** "What might help from here is..."

If you get stuck, you might try to:

- Write just a few lines
- Come back to it later
- Or imagine what you would say to someone else in the same position

5. Read it back

When you're finished, pause and read the letter slowly. Notice:

- What stands out
- What feels different (if anything)
- What it's like to be spoken to in this way

Key idea

Self-compassion is not letting yourself off the hook. It is responding with acceptance and compassion, rather than criticism and fear. It is creating the conditions where you can stay engaged, learn, and respond more effectively.

- **Be mindful** – acknowledge the form your suffering takes.
- **Be human** – we are all imperfect and struggle.
- **Be kind** – what do you need right now?