



Instructor Guide

Unit 1: Lesson 3 Self-Compassion

Objectives:

- The child will be able to define Self-Compassion.
- The child will learn about the healing effect that Self-Compassion can have.
- The child will be able to name at least three ways to practice Self-Compassion.

Time Needed: It is flexible. You can choose to do everything in this guide, or you might select just a few parts to do with the kids each day

Materials, depending on which activities you choose:

- 1-4-8 PowerPoint presentation; a screen on which to project the presentation
- 1-4-5 Information handout (1 per child). This handout summarizes most of the information included in the Self-Compassion PowerPoint presentation.
- Whiteboard for *Activity Option 4: Brainstorming Self-Compassion*
- 1-4-7 Assessment for Self-Compassion (1 per child)
- 1-4-6 Activity to Write a Self-Compassion Letter handout (1 per child)
- Markers, pens and paper
- For visual art activity, provide construction paper, glue, and allow time for kids to gather leaves from outside. (You can also provide colored paper and scissors to cut out paper leaves and flowers).
- A copy of the following picture books to read aloud:
 - [The Good Egg by Jory John](#)
 - [I Am Enough by Grace Byers](#)
 - [Her Body Can by Katie Crenshaw and Ady Meschke](#)
- A copy of 1-4-4 *Sharing Circle Script for Self-Compassion*

Key Concept: Merriam-Webster defines compassion as “sympathetic consciousness of others’ distress, together with the desire to alleviate it.” What happens when we take that desire and turn it onto ourselves? This lesson looks at that process. We will evaluate the concept of compassion towards one’s self, and the healing effect that it can have. In this lesson, students will learn to acknowledge their flaws in a healthy way and be compassionate towards themselves.

Fundamental Skills or Competencies:

Self-awareness, Identifying emotions, Self-management, Stress management, Self-motivation

Part One: Watch Video for Kids About Self-Compassion

Start by watching the *Self-Compassion Video for Kids*. After watching the video, you can move into Part Two below.

Part Two: Discussions about Self-Compassion

Essential Questions:

- What does it mean to show compassion for others?
- What is Self-Compassion and how do we practice it?

Key Concept One: Self-Compassion is your own superpower to help heal inner pain.

In the movie *Black Panther*, T'Challa drinks the purple heart-shaped herb in order to get his powers. This special drink of his ancestors allows him to have extra strength and to heal quickly from wounds during battles. His ability to self-heal sets him apart from everyone else in Wakanda and helps him do heroic things.

It is common for characters in fictional stories to have magic powers. How many of you have seen the movie *Tangled*? Do you remember what happens when Rapunzel wraps her hair around Eugene's wounded hand and starts to sing?

Rapunzel's hair has the ability to heal injuries instantly. If she ever injures herself, she can miraculously use her hair to self-heal faster than other people. Both *Black Panther* and *Rapunzel* can quickly heal from their physical wounds.

But consider this - what if they could also self-heal emotional wounds? You can actually use a skill called Self-Compassion to help you heal your inner pain.

Introduce students to the term compassion. Have children define and use the word "compassion." Write an agreed-upon working definition on a whiteboard or flipchart for reference. If students need prompting, here is a working definition for you: **Compassion** is a deep awareness of and sympathy for the distress or suffering of others, together with a strong desire to make the suffering better.

Prompt students to consider their past experiences with self-criticism:

- Say: "Raise your hand if you have ever been critical to yourself."
- Say: "Raise your hand if you are often harsher with yourself than you are with other people."

The instructor may use this time to describe a time they were critical of themselves or harsher on themselves than others might have been. Share how you feel after forgiving yourself and allowing yourself to make mistakes.

Part Three: Activity Options

*For a one-page brief summary of quick activity options, please see *1-4-3 Quick Guide to Breakout Activity Options for Self-Compassion*.

Activity Option 1: Lead students through a discussion about Self-Compassion:

Use the *1-4-8 Self-Compassion Presentation* PowerPoint document or the *1-4-5 Information Sheet for Self-Compassion* as a guide. (There is slightly more detail in the PowerPoint presentation).

Activity Option 2: Scripted guide to writing a Self-Compassion Letter.

- Hand each student a copy of worksheet *1-4-6 Activity to Write a Self-Compassion Letter*. Explain that you are going to ask them to participate in a short self-compassion exercise, in which they will be asked to write down their critical thoughts and respond to them kindly.
- For primary students, just ask them to think about what they would say in a letter.
 - Assure students that their writing is to be **completely private**. No one else will see or read what they wrote. This may require slight adjustments to seating (i.e. pulling grouped/paired seats apart).
 - *Note*: Some students are more sensitive than others, and we can never be aware of what is going on in the life of all students. If a student shows any emotional distress, make sure to provide them a safe space in which to process and be sure to make a counselor referral.
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Use the following script/directions for this activity:

Please write down a few thoughts that you commonly have in which you put yourself down or shame yourself in some way. For example, you may think to yourself, I am “not skinny enough,” “not attractive enough,” “not smart enough,” “not good enough” or “too shy or timid.” (Pause for 2-3 mins to give students time to write these down).

- If a student has difficulty coming up with a self-criticism, ask them to write how they think others might criticize them. **DO NOT PROVIDE CRITICISMS FOR THEM.** This would be very damaging.

Now take a moment to reflect and remind yourself that you are not alone in this struggle, that many other people struggle with the same thing as you. Remind yourself that this is a common universal experience and that you are not alone. Please take a few minutes to reflect on this and write down your thoughts. (Pause for 2-3 minutes to give students time to write these down).

Now imagine that your best friend or someone who is very dear to you is struggling with the same thing. Write down what you would tell him or her. (Pause for 2-3 minutes).

Now take a moment and reread the last section as if it is written from your best friend to you. The words are for YOU from yourself. (Pause for 1-2 minutes to give students time).

Activity Option 3: Discussion and reflection on writing a Self-Compassion letter:

- Ask students: “What was this exercise like for you? How did you feel reading the letter you wrote to a struggling friend compared to how you felt after writing the self-criticisms at first?”
- Ask students: “What was the hardest part for you about treating yourself with compassion? What did you like about this activity?”

Activity Option 4: Brainstorm ways to practice Self-Compassion (write answers on whiteboard):

- Ask students: *What are some other ways we can practice Self-Compassion?*
(Record students' suggestions on the whiteboard. Have students choose at least 3 that appeal to them). If students have trouble coming up with ideas, suggest these:
 - Giving/getting a hug
 - Taking a bath
 - Doing something we enjoy
 - Listening to music
 - Reaching out to a friend
 - Positive self-talk: remind yourself that everyone has setbacks while pursuing a goal or trying to make change: keep trying!
 - Remind yourself of challenges in your past at which you've succeeded. You were in a tough spot *then* and you made it: you will again!

Activity Option 5: Hold a full group Sharing Circle to discuss Self-Compassion.

- Please use the complete guided script for facilitators labeled *1-4-4 Sharing Circle Script on Self-Compassion*. Allow 20-35 minutes for this activity, depending on how many rounds you complete and how large the circle is.

Activity Option 6: Read aloud and discuss a picture book about Self-Compassion.

- We recommend the following books that embody the themes of this lesson plan. After reading each book aloud, ask the children how they think the story relates to practicing self-compassion.
 - The Good Egg by Jory John
 - I Am Enough by Grace Byers
 - Her Body Can by Katie Crenshaw and Ady Meschke

Activity Option 7: Physical activity: Children will engage in activities with hula hoops that require coordination and stamina. When they “miss,” or grow tired or need to stop, remind them to practice saying something compassionate to themselves.

1. Arrange hula hoops into a big circle on the floor. Kids have to walk around the circle dribbling a basketball into each hoop one time.

2. Have kids jump around the circle from hoop to hoop as fast as possible, completing the circle many times as they can without stopping.

3. Have kids place a hula hoop on the ground right in front them. Ask each kid to jump into the hoop. After each successful jump, ask kids to move hula hoop slightly farther away. As it becomes more difficult for kids to jump into the hoop, remind them to be kind to themselves.



Activity Option 8: Drama/Theater activity: Invite kids to form groups and create a skit about this week's theme, which is practicing Self-Compassion. Below are prompts:

- “Your team is competing in the Olympics in track and field. During one of the final races, your fastest runner trips and falls, and your team loses the gold medal. Your fastest runner is very upset and needs friends to remind them how to have self-compassion.”
- “You are doing a class play in front of the whole school. One of the main characters forgets their lines and needs other cast members to help out. After the play, the person who forgot their lines is very embarrassed. Help them find Self-Compassion.”

Activity Option 9: Visual Art activity: Make a Self-Compassion tree.

- Each kid will receive a blank piece of heavy white paper. Kids can collect leaves and flowers from outside to glue onto the paper. (If the weather is poor, provide colored construction paper and scissors for kids to cut out paper leaves and flowers, or provide stickers, pre-cut leaves, and pre-cut paper flowers).
- Once the leaves have been gathered, each child will draw a tree trunk with a crayon or marker on the white paper. Then they will glue the leaves and flowers onto their tree. Each leaf and flower can represent an act of kindness that the children will do for themselves.



Extension Activity at Home:

Allow students to extend their thinking about self-compassion by generating 3-5 new ideas (beyond the ones they came up with in class) for how to practice self-compassion. Students can try at least one at home and write a one paragraph summary of the experience.

Part Four: Assessment

If you want to do a formal assessment at the end, hand out one printed copy to each child of *1-4-7 Assessment for Self-Compassion*. Ask the children to do the written exercise. For primary students, you can talk through this assessment as a discussion.

Supplemental/Extended Reading

Self-Compassion articles by Dr. Kristin Neff. These articles are intended as background information for the teachers or parents.

<http://self-compassion.org/the-three-elements-of-self-compassion-2/>

<http://self-compassion.org/what-self-compassion-is-not-2/>

Common Core Standards

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.10

Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.1

Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.6

Acquire and use accurately grade-appropriate general academic and domain-specific words and phrases; gather vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression.

* The character Wally West (Kid Flash) is portrayed by Keiynan Lonsdale, a Black actor and LGBTQ advocate.