



SUPERHERO IRL

SELF-COMPASSION

Part 2

PRACTICING SELF-COMPASSION

Like the magic potion in *Harry Potter* or the healing powers of the angels in *Supernatural*, or Force healing in *Star Wars*, self-compassion can help us to work on healing our deep emotional wounds.

Practicing self-compassion isn't easy. Most of us have not been taught to practice self-compassion. In fact, many of us might have been taught that being kind to ourselves is conceited or selfish, or that we will become less motivated if we allow ourselves to be kind to ourselves.

But the truth is that research suggests the opposite. When we are kind to ourselves, we are likely to be more productive and less selfish.

Think about it. When we have more energy, we have more ability to help others.

If you have ever flown on a plane, you might remember that in case of an emergency you are instructed to put on your own oxygen mask before assisting others. Like the Batman, Iron-Man, Buffy the Vampire Slayer, or any other hero, we need to heal ourselves first before we can help others.

Let's practice:

Take a moment to notice what you're going through right now. Notice if you're feeling anxious, depression, frustrated, bored, tired, lonely, overwhelmed, or another emotion. And notice the way you are responding to yourself. For example, notice if you are judging yourself for feeling this way.

Take a moment and notice how you are feeling right now. If you are willing, please write it down below as practice, for example: “I’m noticing that I’m feeling depressed and I’m mad at myself for feeling this way. I think that I am weak and no one cares about me.” This noticing of how you are feeling and thinking is an example of mindfulness. Write down your own example. Alternatively, feel free to draw you feelings on a piece of paper. For example, you can draw a stick figure with a thought bubble, or you can draw a depression monster. If you feel uncomfortable writing or drawing your feelings, that’s okay too. Feel free to take a few moments and silently reflect on how you are feeling.



Now take a moment to reflect and remind yourself that you are not alone in experiencing these emotions. This is *common humanity*. Thousands of people around the world struggle with the same things as you. Remind yourself that this is a common universal experience and that you are not alone.

In the space below, see if you can write down your own practice with common humanity. For example, “many people feel depressed from time to time. What I am feeling is completely normal and anyone in my situation would feel the same way.”

Alternatively, you can draw this or think about this, if you feel uncomfortable with writing this out.



Now imagine that your best friend or someone who is very dear to you is struggling with the same thing. Take a few minutes and write your friend a kind and supportive letter, genuinely from your heart to their heart, in the most supportive way possible. For example, “I’m so sorry you’re feeling so upset right now. Everyone feels this way sometimes. It doesn’t mean anything bad about you. I am here for you and we will get through this together.”

Feel free to type in your responses below or use a piece of paper or a Notes phone app instead if you prefer. If you would rather draw this or imagine writing your friend this letter that’s okay too.



In the same way as you can practice being kind to others, you can also practice being kind to yourself. This is *self-kindness*. When we are feeling physically or emotionally hurt, we tend to benefit from kind words, a soothing touch (for example, a hug), and physical warmth. This means that wrapping ourselves in a warm blanket can be as helpful for our broken heart as a cast for our broken arm.

Similarly, giving or receiving hugs from our friends, family members, pets, or even from ourselves can also make us feel better over time. For example, you can put your hand (or both hands) on your heart or wrap your arms around yourself to give yourself a gentle self-hug.

Finally, receiving kind words from others or giving them to ourselves can also help to soothe some of our emotional pain as well.

Remember that it is okay for you to treat yourself the same way you would treat a dear friend. You are also a human being. Your feelings also matter.

Founded in 2013, SuperheroIRL is a project of Pop Culture Hero Coalition, the first 501c-3 non-profit to use relatable stories from TV, comics, and film, to develop tools for living, including conflict resolution, resilience, empathy, and other crucial mental health skills.

Created by pop-culture-fluent clinical psychologists and educators, our work is in schools, comic cons, children's hospitals – and homes in the age of COVID-19.

www.PopCultureHero.org

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