**COMPASSION**

Compassion is the ultimate and most meaningful embodiment of emotional maturity. It is through compassion that a person achieves the highest peak and deepest reach in his or her search for self-fulfillment.  
  
Being compassionate is similar to what we call support in this program. We get outside our own self-centered egos and care about someone beyond ourselves. In the process we are helped and changed - perhaps more than the person we are helping.  
  
As we mature, we learn that not all help is beneficial. It is more helpful to confront a friend in his delusion than to accept his misguided actions. Such tough honesty supports his strength and his ability to work the Steps. Sometimes it is hard to be a friend to a man in great pain. We might prefer to pull away rather than be with him as he suffers, but we can be more compassionate if we accept our powerlessness to cure his pain. Compassion has a reverberating effect in relationships. Not only do we give it and grow from the experience, we also become the receivers of what we send out.

People often think of compassion as being other-directed, but it can be valuable when self-directed too. The more intense your suffering, the more you should love and forgive yourself. Pain is part of life, but you don't need to pile on, instead of shame, guilt, or blame, try to be kind to yourself.

Compassion is something we assume is always directed to others. To feel compassion literally means, "to suffer with," so when we have this emotion, we are actually sharing the suffering of a fellow human. But we can also be the recipients of our own compassion. Being kind to our self is a crucial component in any process of psychological healing.

**Self-compassion in depression**

It is ironic that when things get very difficult in life, and we become depressed, we tend to blame our misfortunes and our own suffering on ourselves. This is called "turning against the self," which seems very unfair and, in fact, could almost be seen as a kind of self-betrayal. If things being hard in my life weren't enough, I also turn against myself and conclude that my [personality](https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/basics/personality" \t "_blank) and how I have managed my life are the origin of all my problems. I am wicked, lazy, weak, and incompetent. In cases of severe [depression](https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/basics/depression" \t "_blank), these feelings of [guilt](https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/basics/guilt" \t "_blank) and inadequacy can reach a delusional intensity, but even in milder depressions, the "turning against the self" tends to perpetuate and reinforce the feelings of sadness.

We can challenge this self-reproach with self-compassion. If you are the victim of your own recriminations and guilt, remind yourself that you are also a suffering and fallible human being, struggling through the trials of life and therefore worthy of compassion. In fact, this compassion should even be proportionate to the amount of suffering you are experiencing. The more intense your sadness, the more you should love and [forgive](https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/basics/forgiveness" \t "_blank) yourself.

**Don't assume others are doing better.**

Feelings of failure and inadequacy are often based on a belief that others are managing their lives better. You may be certain that everyone else is enjoying a superior [social life](https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/basics/social-life" \t "_blank) and achieving more occupationally. If your [self-esteem](https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/basics/self-esteem" \t "_blank) is fragile, you are likely to believe that others are more successful, more loved, and less [neurotic](https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/basics/neuroticism" \t "_blank) than you.

The reality, however, is that we all struggle and that the version of ourselves we portray to others is always very heavily sanitized and edited. Even the apparently best-adjusted individuals have issues, fears, and regrets they would rather forget. Suffering is universal, and [happiness a myth](https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/you-are-not-meant-be-happy/202102/you-are-not-meant-be-happy" \t "_blank). So, once again, give yourself a break and forgive yourself, your shortcomings.

You are only human.