



Cultivating Self-Compassion for Social Action

2020 has been a challenge, which can take a toll on managing emotions, empathizing with others, and taking positive social action. Feeling disconnected or lonely, angry or anxious about the past, and uncertain about the future can lead to feeling negative about ourselves.

How can we be more patient and present for family members, and feel less depleted and more energized to take on social action? By practicing self-compassion.

In hard times, practicing self-compassion can be challenging. Negative situations or events tend to feel larger than those that are positive, a phenomenon known as the “negativity effect.” Feeling negative or critical of ourselves—and taking it out on others—may be an automatic response to stress.

Combatting these feelings can mean taking a step back. When you feel down, talk to yourself as you would to a friend having a hard time. Speaking compassionately to yourself doesn’t mean denying or ignoring your stress and anxiety, but rather accepting that you feel these emotions. It’s okay to acknowledge that life can be hard sometimes.

If talking to yourself with kindness is challenging, try writing a letter about the good things you have done or are doing well—not your lack of accomplishments or the mistakes you have made. List how you have contributed positively to others and the world. How can you see the good growing? Acknowledging what you are accomplishing now can help you feel more hopeful, and provide energy for creating more positive change.



Talk to yourself as you would to a friend having a hard time.