

4. Being Kind to Yourself



Sometimes, feeling confident in our ability to cope with a problem (i.e., our self-efficacy) is more challenging than the problem itself.

It's not uncommon for people to have thoughts such as, "Everyone seems to be coping with this better than me", "I shouldn't be feeling so overwhelmed by the situation," or "I just can't cope."

Although this kind of thinking is understandable, it isn't particularly helpful (in fact, it often makes us feel worse). Instead, it can be more effective to use self-compassion.

Self-compassion is treating yourself with kindness and understanding. Self-compassion isn't 'being soft' or 'looking on the bright side'. It involves both **acknowledging the difficulties of the situation** you are facing, whilst **seeing your own strengths and encouraging yourself**.



If you're not used to being kind to yourself, it might take a little bit of practise at first. You could try asking yourself the following kinds of questions:

- In what ways have I coped with this situation better than I might have expected myself to?
- What difficult circumstances have I coped with in the past?
- What qualities (e.g. resilience, my sense of humour) helped me cope with these challenges?
- What can I be optimistic about right now?
- What evidence supports me being optimistic about these things?
- What things have I done today that show me I'm coping?
- What is one thing I've done today that I can be proud of?

Another way to do this is to think of what you might tell a close friend (or your child) who's doing their best in a difficult situation - sometimes we can be more patient, generous, encouraging and supportive of others than we are of ourselves.

So practise treating yourself with the same kindness, compassion, and understanding as you do others.

You can also try something called a 'Done List' or a 'Solved List'. A 'Done List' is similar to a 'To- Do List', but rather than listing to all the things you need to do or all of the problems you need to address, it involves writing down all the things you have completed or achieved in that day and all of the challenges you've already overcome.

It's important to write down both big and small achievements - from making the bed to finishing an important work project. This strategy might sound simple, but it can help your mind pay attention to all the things you achieve in a day, which in turn, can boost your sense of confidence and control.



List all of the things you've done to adopt to the new way of life during this pandemic. Make a special note of challenges you've overcome and things you are proud of yourself for.

References:

*The University of New South Wales
St. Vincent's Hospital, Sydney*

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