
FEBRUARY 2023

Compassion and Self-Love



Mental Health Series



Improving Mental Health with Compassion

February is a month filled with acts of kindness and love. Focusing on these acts during this month can help you increase your ability to be compassionate. Compassion is the ability to see suffering in others and have a desire to help them or comfort them. By being compassionate, you are better able to understand and support the emotions of other people. As a result, you will feel more motivated to help and support others - and yourself. Being compassionate, to others and yourself, has shown to be extremely beneficial both psychologically and physiologically. Compassion builds connection and connecting with others has the ability to improve your mental and physical health, as well as increase your lifespan. Other benefits include:

- Increased sense of connection to others
- Strengthened immune system
- Lower risk of anxiety and depression
- Lower stress levels
- Higher self-esteem
- Better outlook on life



What is Compassionate Parenting?

Learning to be compassionate will increase your ability to be a compassionate parent. Remember that compassion means understanding the emotions of others, or in other words, putting yourself in their shoes. As parents, your children will come to you with various problems and emotions and one of the best things you can do to understand their suffering is to put yourself in their shoes. For example, if your child struggles with anxiety, they are constantly feeling like they are in a fight-or-flight mode. Imagine being in that mode while trying to juggle puberty, school, social media, etc. Once you can better understand your child's headspace, you can know how to better guide them through their trials.

Ways to Practice Compassionate Parenting

- Don't react defensively, flinch, or dismiss their pain.
- Sit with your children and allow them to feel their emotions and express them.
- Allow yourself to feel your children's painful emotions.
- Tell your children you feel their pain, hear them, and see them.
- Tell your children you know the past hurts them, and you're sorry.
- Tell your children you'll never shame them for expressing their feelings.
- Tell your children it's okay to express painful feelings about their past.
- Listen to your children with all your heart.
- Give them your total attention, support, and love.

Remember that parenting is difficult and it takes practice to be compassionate. Try to be kind to yourself throughout this journey and make sure to practice Self-Love.



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Compassion and Self-Love

What is Self-Love?

We hear people talking about Self-Love frequently, but what does it even mean? Self-Love refers to appreciating yourself and treating yourself with kindness, both in thought and action. To love yourself means that you accept yourself fully, treat yourself with respect, and nurture your growth and well-being. This doesn't mean that you won't have negative thoughts, but overall you have a positive view of yourself. Understand that you will have disappointments or be upset, but you need to love yourself through these moments. Think of when your child does something wrong, and although you are disappointed in them, you still love them. Give yourself this same courtesy and cheer yourself on throughout the highs and the lows.

The Power of Self-Love

Self-Love is a powerful tool that can completely change your outlook on life. Self-Love leads to better mental health, higher self-esteem, more motivation, less anxiety, and better sleep. The moment you start practicing Self-Love, you will want to take better care of yourself and you will gradually acquire a healthier lifestyle. Whether this includes a healthier diet, exercise, or making sleep a priority, you will want to nurture your body and mind because you love yourself.

Additionally, you will no longer neglect your feelings and your values. Self-Love is the foundation that will allow us to stand up for ourselves. You will have a great ability to set boundaries, create better relationships with others, and pursue your life goals. This will also set a great example for your children so that they too can develop the habit of Self-Love. This is crucial in making sure that they can be better equipped to handle the ups and downs of growing up.



Ways to Practice Self-Love

1. Practice Self-Care
2. Focus on your needs, not your wants
3. Keep a Gratitude Journal
4. Give Yourself Compliments Daily
5. Set Healthy Boundaries
6. Forgive Others
7. Forgive Yourself
8. Practice Mindfulness

Additionally, go to [ParentGuidance.org](https://www.parentguidance.org) and take our course on Self-Compassion:

A course thumbnail for "How To Develop Self-Compassion" by Paul Parkin, Ph.D. The thumbnail features a man in a grey sweater speaking. Below the title is a small circular profile picture of Paul Parkin. To the right of the title is a red heart icon with a speech bubble pointing to it that says "Click the heart to view the course".

How To Develop Self-Compassion

 Paul Parkin, Ph.D.

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