

Embracing Self-Compassion

Our brains are built to have a negativity bias, focusing on what is wrong or dangerous. As nurses, we are trained—and rewarded—to find problems. When we over-identify with the negative and turn that inward, we scan for deficiencies in ourselves. The pattern of scanning for deficiencies can become engrained and damaging.

Compassion	Walking on the same path with someone, not trying to get into their shoes; sharing someone’s experience without trying to fix them or make it better
Compassion with ourselves	Being our own best friend; frequently, our self-talk is the opposite of what we would tell a friend

Build a Self-Compassion Practice

Set aside 5 or 10 minutes for a guided meditation. Imagine yourself in a room with a chair and someone you care about sits in that chair and tells you about a problem they are having, but the problem is really one that you are having. Respond to them by speaking words of comfort and gesturing in comforting way, such as giving a hug. The friend then leaves and an image of you comes in. Extend to yourself the same words of kindness and compassion.

Practice this repeatedly so the next time you make mistake and begin to berate yourself, catch yourself. Notice how you are treating yourself and then engage the kinder self-talk you have practiced.

When we treat ourselves that way, we naturally treat other people that way.

Practice Self-Compassion in the Moment in a Crisis

- Take deep breath, tell yourself you are doing good work, you are valuable, and you are needed.
- Take advantage of the camaraderie that goes on in a crisis. Accept the support and be willing to receive compassion from other people.