

Basic Steps in Self-Empathy

(These steps are written in a particular order but they are effective in almost any order. Do them in a way that is authentic for you)

1. Mindfulness: Turn towards your experience with kindness and focused attention. Stabilize an attitude of acceptance immediately with phrases like: "I'm reacting. It's okay to react." "I can pause and notice what's happening inside." "This is just part of being human. Everyone goes through this."

2. Resource or Anchor in the Expansive Perspective: Resource or anchor in an expansive perspective means giving your attention to something that helps you get centered and see reactivity for what it is. Anchoring helps create access to compassion, wisdom, and skill. Ask yourself: "What could I remember right now that would help me connect to inner resources or locate in an expansive perspective?"

An anchor is something that is specific, doable, has aliveness/meaning, is simple, and can be done any time and anywhere. It could be physical, verbal, energetic, visual, or any combination. Examples of anchors include:

- Holding your hand on your heart as you remember a special moment of someone appreciating you.
- Standing straight, rolling your shoulders back, and breathing into your abdomen
- Running your attention along your center line and saying, "My only purpose is to meet each moment with acceptance and love."

Hold your attention on an anchor until you feel a shift into the expansive perspective.

3. In Mindfulness, name feelings (body sensations and emotions): For example, "My chest feels tight." "I feel angry." "I feel anxious." "I feel content." Etc. Use the feelings list.

4. In Mindfulness, name needs: "What needs are met or unmet?" "What's important to me right now?" "What do I care most about in this situation?" "What needs do I perceive to be threatened or am I hopeful will be met?"

There might be different layers of needs:

- A need that is directly related to the present situation: "When my co-worker gives vent to her anger at her computer that doesn't meet my needs for peace and focus in our work space."
- A need for love and reassurance for the part of you that is reacting out of an old wound and core limiting belief. For example, "Hearing my co-worker's voice, a part of me is feeling scared and wants to know I am safe. Let me look around right now and notice if there is really any danger or not."

5. In Mindfulness, identify the Neutral Observation: Ask yourself: "**What happened the moment I got triggered?**" Describe the external trigger event as a neutral observation (something a video camera could record). If you don't know why you are triggered, replay what someone said or did, or your most recent experiences, or something you said to yourself, until you feel a charge. This is likely the trigger event. Just choose one moment in time.

6. In Mindfulness, identify thoughts immediately connected to the trigger event: Ask yourself: "**What am I telling myself about what happened? What meaning am I making of it? What limiting beliefs have been activated?**"

7. In Mindfulness, articulate requests: What do you want to ask yourself or someone else to do to honor or nourish the needs you just identified? NVC requests are specific and do-able so that you will follow through with them. When you keep your commitments to yourself, you build security and confidence. Specific requests answer most of these questions: What? When? Who? Where? How long? How often?