

Guide To Self-Compassion

Gateshead Psychological Service





Daily life can feel like a rollercoaster of emotions, and can leave us finding things difficult to manage at times.

The COVID-19 pandemic has increased pressures on parents and carers even further. There is now a clash of roles – being a parent / carer / teacher / employee / friend often all at once and within the home environment.

When things aren't going so well, we can often feel like we aren't doing "good enough".

As they saying goes, we are our own worst critic.

Parents and carers are asked to put on their own oxygen mask on first before helping their children on an airplane to make sure we effectively support and keep them safe.

*We can apply this to our own wellbeing – in order to provide the best care, we must care for ourselves **and show ourselves kindness** during difficult times.*

What Is Self-Compassion?

Compassion is the ability to show empathy, love, and concern to people who are in difficulty.

*Self-compassion is **simply compassion directed inwards**, relating to ourselves as the object of care and concern when faced with the experience of suffering.*

What is the difference to self care?

*Self-compassion is **thinking** about yourself compassionately. Self-care is **treating** yourself compassionately. The two terms sound similar, but they contain a **thinking versus doing** distinction.*



***Kintsugi** is the Japanese art of putting broken pottery pieces back together with gold — a metaphor for embracing your flaws and imperfection.*

Self-compassion means we acknowledge the scars/broken pieces rather than ignore them, and work on treating these with kindness – like gold.

Steps To Self-Compassion



Awareness

Be attentive/ sensitive to the fact that suffering is occurring (emotionally, mentally or physically). Instead of ignoring any negative feelings, allow them to happen and pay attention to them.



Normalising

Recognise that what you are going through is "universal" and common between all people. We all experience pain. It isn't our fault. We are not to blame and we are not alone.



Kindness

Meet our pain with kindness, care and concern. Treat your pain like you would treat the pain shown by someone you love.



Alleviation

Focus on ways to alleviate the pain through further comfort, caring, providing perspective, finding strength and the courage to take action to address the problem.

RAIN Technique

Another helpful way of approaching self-compassion is by using the RAIN technique (Tara Brach)

When experiencing a negative feeling...

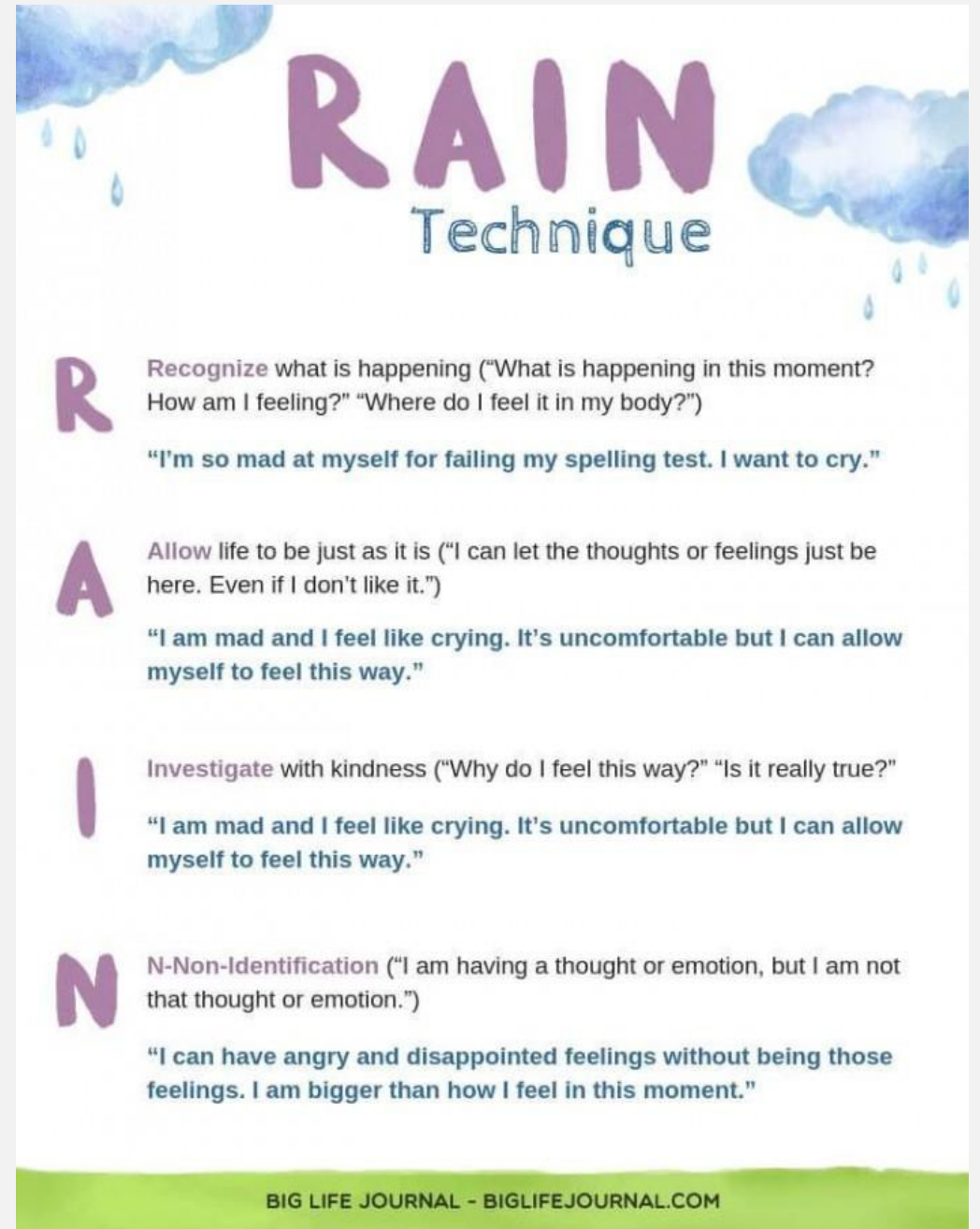
R = Recognize the feeling

A = Accept it for how it is

I = Investigate the feeling

N = Nurture it with a loving presence

*Why not try a **guided RAIN 10 minutes exercise** to give it a go?*



RAIN Technique

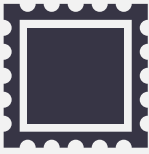
R **Recognize** what is happening ("What is happening in this moment? How am I feeling?" "Where do I feel it in my body?")
"I'm so mad at myself for failing my spelling test. I want to cry."

A **Allow** life to be just as it is ("I can let the thoughts or feelings just be here. Even if I don't like it.")
"I am mad and I feel like crying. It's uncomfortable but I can allow myself to feel this way."

I **Investigate** with kindness ("Why do I feel this way?" "Is it really true?")
"I am mad and I feel like crying. It's uncomfortable but I can allow myself to feel this way."

N **N-Non-Identification** ("I am having a thought or emotion, but I am not that thought or emotion.")
"I can have angry and disappointed feelings without being those feelings. I am bigger than how I feel in this moment."

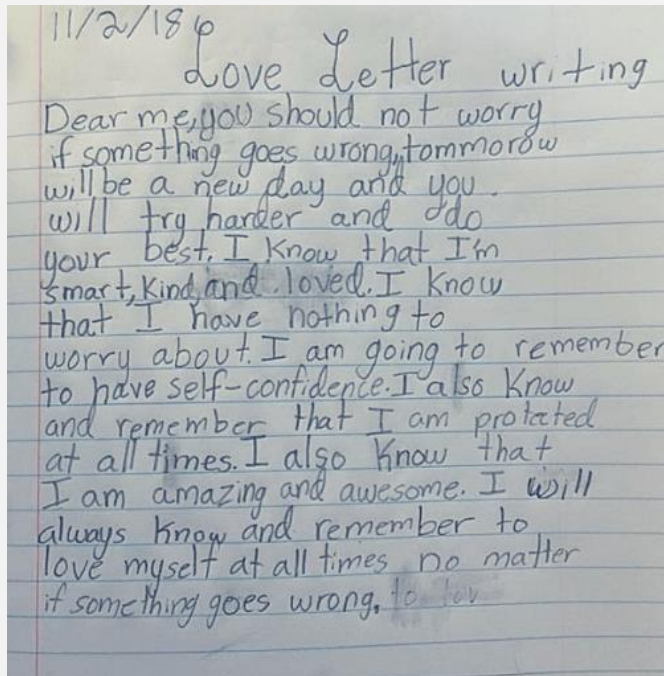
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Love Letters to Yourself Exercise



Try writing a letter to yourself expressing compassion for a part of yourself that you dislike or that makes you feel negatively.

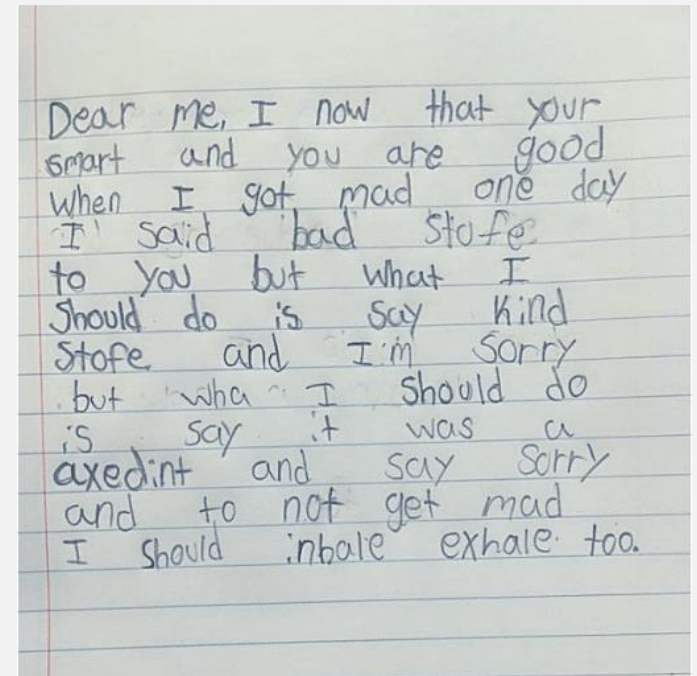


Need some prompts?

- 1) Show awareness of your struggle. You might say "I see that you are having a hard time." Whatever it is, just bring it to your awareness and write it down.
- 2) Bring in some words of unconditional love. No matter how much you are suffering, you still get to be loved and cared for.
- 3) Show yourself some empathy for the distress you are in. You might say "I see you. I see the pain you are going through. I can relate to that."
- 4) Recognize your common humanity. In your letter, you want to bring in the common humanity of your struggle. You could say "Everybody knows what it is like to have anxiety. I am definitely not alone."

You don't have to share it with anyone else.

You could send it to yourself in the post, or open and read on a bad day.



Want to know more?



Adults

- [Why Parents Need Self-Compassion During the Coronavirus Pandemic](#)
- [Teens Are Better Off When Parents Practice Self-Compassion](#)
- [Parenting & Practicing Self-Compassion](#)
- [Self-Compassion for Parents](#)
- [Being Kinder to Yourself](#)
- [Self-kindness as Self-care \(Anna Freud\)](#)
- [Sushi Train Metaphor by Dr. Russ Harris](#)



Children and Young People

- [Self Compassion for Kids](#)
- [How To Strengthen Your Child's Self-Confidence With Self-Compassion](#)
- [The Reflection in Me - Self Acceptance Story](#)
- [Be Kind To Yourself Activity \(GoNoodle\)](#)
- [RAIN exercise for children](#)
- [Self-Compassion Rap](#)

School staff

- [Empower Your Students with Self-Compassion – Activities](#)
- [How Self-Compassion Supports Academic Motivation and Emotional Wellness](#)



“If your compassion does not include yourself, it is incomplete.”
– Jack Kornfield

