

Skill Spotlight 2 - Self Compassion

Treat yourself as you would treat a friend

Caring for yourself is an important part of helping you care for others in your role as a fire and emergency service volunteer. Practicing care and compassion for yourself helps you to have the emotional resources you need to support and care for others, including in your volunteer role – think of it like putting the oxygen mask on yourself in an aeroplane before helping others.

Research done with fire and emergency service volunteers aged 16-25 years showed that self compassion was connected to higher wellbeing as well as lower levels of psychological distress.

But self compassion is more than just being nice to yourself! An important part of self compassion is practicing skills to help ourselves during difficult times and struggles. In fact, self compassion is itself a skill that can be developed with practice.



So, what is self compassion?

It has three main components

(NEFF, 2012)

1 MINDFULNESS

Observing thoughts and feelings in a non-judgmental way, including those that are difficult



2 COMMON HUMANITY

Keeping in mind that we are not alone in experiencing suffering or difficulty

3 SELF KINDNESS

Being warm and understanding towards ourselves, particularly when we do not meet ideals we set for ourselves

Try this self compassion check

There are lots of ways to practice self compassion, but one example is to do a brief self compassion check when you notice difficult thoughts or feelings coming up. This takes three steps.



Notice the difficult thought or feeling and that this is a moment of suffering

THIS HURTS



Remember that you are not alone in suffering, many people in the world are suffering at any point in time

I AM NOT ALONE IN THIS



Consider what you can do to express warmth and understanding to yourself in this moment. What would you say to a friend who was struggling?

WHAT DO I NEED IN THIS MOMENT TO TAKE CARE OF MYSELF?

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