

Body Image Repair & Resilience

With:

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There can be no self-care without self-compassion.

Self-compassion prompts us to treat ourselves in ways that alleviate, rather than cause or amplify, our pain and suffering. While many understand compassion and kindness to be essential in our interactions with others, we don't always see these as core values for our relationship with ourselves.

We neglect our self-care, directly and indirectly contributing to our pain and suffering. We judge ourselves for our own suffering, listening to the voice of our inner critic as it rehearses our shortcomings, our errors, and our deficiencies.

It doesn't have to be this way.

-Chanequa Walker-Barnes



How to use this workbook

You can print this workbook out to work in over the next three weeks...and beyond. Or, simply use it as a guide to prompt your journaling and reflection.

You may wish to return to these exercises and prompts periodically to see how your thoughts have changed as you do this work.

(Note that links to outside resources will not be accessible from the printed version, so you may want to hang onto the electronic copy for future reference.)

Remember, it's not realistic to expect that you'll never have a negative thought about your body again. Our goal is to increase your resilience so that when difficult feelings about your body surface, you can respond to them self-compassionately, without those difficult feelings leading you away from your values and true self-care.

Take good care,

Cassie and Monica



Take Good Care® Model



The Take Good Care Model was developed by Cassie Christopher, MS RDN CD and is referenced throughout this workbook to help you visualize the path towards healing your relationship with your body (and my extension food). The pyramid helps us understand the steps from the bottom to the top, with calming the nervous system being the foundation of a healthy relationship with self.



SECTION 1

Calm the Nervous System





The Window of Tolerance

Preoccupation with the way your body looks, self-criticism or struggles with either overly restricting or overeating are common when you are outside of your Window of Tolerance (as developed by psychologist Dr. Dan Siegel). Calming your nervous system so you can get back into your window of tolerance is the best way to set yourself up for helpful thoughts and behaviors, and is the first step to increasing body image resilience.





Journaling Prompts

How do you know when you are outside your window of tolerance? (For example: how does it feel in your body, what thoughts occur, what actions do you take?)

How do you know when you are inside your Window of Tolerance? (For example: how does it feel in your body, what thoughts occur, what actions do you take?)



Experiments: Calming the Nervous System

The following strategies can help you get back inside your window of tolerance. Experiment to see what helps you feel calmer and kinder to yourself:

- Box breathing - Breathe in for the count of 4, hold for 4, breathe out to the count of 4, hold for 4 and start again.
- Yoga - check out [Yoga with Adriene](#) on Youtube for some good sessions that help connect to your body.
- Grounding - take your shoes off and focus your attention on your feet. Move your knees, wiggle your toes, take a step, notice what it feels like on different parts of your feet.
- Self-Compassionate Meditation - Soften, Soothe, Allow: [Download the audio file here.](#)
- Emotional Freedom Technique/Tapping - try [this personal favorite](#) video to get started, there are many resources available if you like it.



Reflection

Use this space to reflect on your experiments with the various techniques to calm the nervous system. How did you feel after trying them? What worked for you? What didn't work for you? What else do you want to try?



SECTION 2

Practicing Self-Compassion





Journaling Prompts

Think of the last time a close friend was struggling with her feelings about her body image, appearance, or weight. What did you say to her? If she was being hard on herself, what was your reaction? (Think of words, tone, nonverbal cues)

How do you normally talk to yourself in situations where you are feeling bad about your body?



How do you normally talk to yourself in situations where you are feeling bad about your body?

Compare and contrast how you treat yourself and how you treat your friends when you are struggling.



How does this body image struggle make you feel isolated? Perhaps you feel you are the only one experiencing it, or you think about how you shouldn't be experiencing it?

Write a statement that recognizes the common humanity of your situation. For example "It's normal to be afraid to show the vulnerability of aging. Many people struggle with this process and feel similarly" (you're in a program full of these people, by the way!)



How are you judging yourself for your struggle? What names are you calling yourself?

Write down some kind and gentle responses to the way you are feeling, similar to how you might speak to a friend. For example, “I know you are afraid to be seen as less than perfect. And yet it was so brave of you to consider what self-acceptance might do for you. I’ll be here for you, no matter the outcome.”



What are some difficult feelings related to your body that you have been avoiding feeling? Name the feelings and acknowledge where they come from if you are able.

If you're avoiding feeling difficult feelings, can you set a timer for 10 minutes and allow yourself to feel? Alternatively, you can use the [soften-soothe-allow](#) meditation to walk you through feeling with kindness. Afterwards, reflect on what it was like to feel what you've been avoiding.



Action Steps: Practicing Self-Compassion

Self-compassion is a practice that you have to continually return to in order to create the new, more compassionate, neural pathways and habits. Here are some actions you can take to set you up for success:

- Unfollow any media organizations or influencers who make you feel bad about yourself.
- When you notice critical thoughts, interrupt them with a self-compassionate affirmation such as “May I be Kind” or “I deserve to love myself”.
- Periodically complete the self-compassionate workbook questions here to analyze current patterns and practice kindness.
- Write yourself a letter with the format, “Dear Body, I’m sorry... I love you...”. See the moving example written by [Dr. Hillary McBride here](#).



SECTION 3

Listen to Yourself





Your Body Story

Let's return to the Body Story activity from the live workshop. You might want to review the story that you created during the workshop. Or use the following page to do the exercise again. Your Body Story will probably change as you do this work and revisiting this exercise at intervals can help you chart your evolution.

INSTRUCTIONS: Draw either a flower or tree to symbolize your relationship with your body.

Step 1: Draw your roots and add labels to represent messages you received (positive and negative) about your body when you were young. You may have received messages from family, friends, TV, magazines, church, doctors, social media, etc.. What messages did you get about the size/shape of your body? What was communicated to you (directly or indirectly) about what kinds of bodies were most valuable?

Step 2: Draw the stem of your tree or plant and consider your current relationship with your body. How do you speak to yourself about your body? What do you believe about health, eating, weight, exercise? How do your beliefs impact your self-care and self-talk?

Step 3: In the top third of the page, draw your branches, petals and/or fruit, and add labels to represent the relationship you'd like to have with your body in the future. What would a peaceful relationship with your body look like? How do you want to feel? How would a positive body image allow you to be more present and engaged in other areas of your life?



Branches/petals

Stem/trunk

Roots



Journaling Prompts

Review the petals or branches where you symbolized what you want your relationship with your body to be. What do these desires uncover about what is most important to you in life or what your core values might be?

Write a vow that orients you towards what is most important to you, and use this vow to help you get back on track when the busyness and distractions of life take you away from yourself. Start with "I vow to..." or "May I..."



SECTION 4

Evidence-Based Behavior Change





What's next?

Once you are calm, kind, and able to listen to yourself to discover what you truly need, then (and only then) can you assess what action(s) you might want to take to move toward specific goals.

You may want to continue your self-compassion work, focus on sustainable weight management, prioritize stress management, work on relationships...whatever aspects of your life need your attention next.

The following journaling prompts can be part of your discernment process.



Journaling Prompts

What have you learned about yourself and your relationship with your body throughout this workbook?

What tools do you want to use in the future to increase your body image resilience?



Thinking back to your vow and what you want for your relationship with your body, what do you need to learn, discover, or grow into now?

From this place of self-compassion and self-acceptance, what aspects of your health or life need your attention next?



What resources and tools do you have access to that can help you move forward with next steps?

Who can you ask for support and guidance?