

## What is self-compassion?

So there are 3 parts to self-compassion. We've already had a look at one of them and that's **mindfulness**. So that's **noticing** difficult or uncomfortable feelings and just letting them be here and not ignoring and pushing them away or resisting them (which is like saying I don't want to feel like this; mindfulness says this **IS** how I'm feeling right now, for good or for bad) or the other thing we do is to exaggerate how bad things are, this is so awful, it's the end of the world, poor me, no-one has got it as bad as me.... Mindfulness is about seeing our situation exactly **as it is**, no more and no less.

The second aspect is what technically is called **Common Humanity**. It's recognising that our imperfections, our mistakes, the fact that we suffer in life is all part of being human; something we all go through. **Nobody is perfect!** it's normal to be imperfect, it's normal for your life to be difficult at times. Do you know anyone who actually has the perfect life, who doesn't get old, or has difficulties in relationships or gets ill?.

This **is** what it takes to be human ... so often when we are finding life difficult or we're criticising ourselves we tend to feel very alone as if we're the only people to be going through this tough time or to make a mistake... but if you take a moment and think about it, right now across the town where you live, across the UK, across the world, there are carers, struggling with the challenges of being a carer, just like you, going through the same emotions and difficulties as you are,... can you get a sense at all of feeling just a little less alone when you think about that?

So we've had mindfulness and common humanity. The third aspect to self-compassion is being **kind, and warm to ourselves when we are suffering**. Often, we're the opposite; have you noticed how self-critical you can be? There's no way we would talk to a friend or even a stranger the way we talk to ourselves. We usually speak much more harshly and cruelly to ourselves than we do to anyone else in our lives. This critical self-talk causes us a lot of pain and hurt (often without realising the impact it's having on us). Remember that 3 circle model I talked about before? Being self-critical takes us into the Red circle and that isn't good for us. It also takes away this great coping mechanism we have, which is our ability to soothe & comfort ourselves.... So as an act of self-kindness we need to actively treat ourselves with care and understanding rather than judge ourselves. We need to be our own **best friend** – speak to ourselves the way we would to our closest friend or if that feels too much of a stretch how about speaking to yourself like you would to a puppy (or a kitten if you're a cat person)...you'd be really gentle and kind with them wouldn't you? By doing this we support, encourage and motivate ourselves rather than beat ourselves up which in the long term is bad for our health.

So, there you have it! That's how I'm defining self-compassion- mindfulness, common humanity and being kind to ourselves when we're struggling.

But above everything try and remember ... **'be your own best friend'**.