

Facilitator Guide: Practice Self-Compassion

Introduction: Why Self-Compassion Matters

You Say:

"In recovery, we often focus on change, goals, and accountability—but many people overlook the importance of **self-compassion**. Being kind to yourself isn't about making excuses, it's about recognizing your humanity, your effort, and your right to learn and grow without shame.

Today, we're going to talk about how practicing self-compassion can actually support recovery, resilience, and long-term motivation."

Key points to highlight:

- Self-compassion helps us respond to mistakes and setbacks **without harsh self-judgment**.
- It can **improve emotional resilience** and reduce shame-based thinking.
- Practicing self-compassion supports motivation by focusing on **learning and growth**, not punishment.

Step 1: Group Brainstorming – What Gets in the Way of Self-Compassion?

You Say: "Before we explore how to practice self-compassion, let's look at why it's so hard for many of us. What makes it difficult to be kind to yourself when things go wrong?"

- Encourage participants to share openly. Possible responses:
 - Fear of becoming lazy or making excuses
 - Internalized guilt or shame
 - A belief that harsh self-criticism is necessary to stay on track

Facilitator's Role:

- Normalize the experience. ("Many people in recovery have a hard time being kind to themselves, it's totally normal.")
- Reflect and summarize the group's input. ("So, it sounds like fear of letting go or guilt can really get in the way.")

- Emphasize that self-compassion is a **learnable skill**, not a personality trait.

Step 2: Introducing the Self-Compassion Tool

You Say:

"Self-compassion isn't about ignoring problems or avoiding responsibility. It's about responding to difficulty with care and understanding—just like you would with a friend. Here are three simple ways to practice it."

Three Elements of Self-Compassion:

- **Self-Kindness** – Speak to yourself with the same tone you'd use with someone you care about.
 - Example prompt: "I'm doing the best I can, and I deserve support, not shame."
- **Common Humanity** – Remind yourself that struggle is part of being human.
 - Example prompt: "I'm not alone, everyone makes mistakes and experiences setbacks."
- **Mindfulness** – Acknowledge your feelings without exaggerating or suppressing them.
 - Example prompt: "This is a moment of difficulty. I'm feeling discouraged right now."

Step 3: Group Discussion – Practicing Self-Compassion

You Say: "Now let's talk about what self-compassion could look like in real life."

Discussion Questions:

- What's your usual self-talk when you make a mistake or fall short?
- What would it sound like if you spoke to yourself the way you would a friend?
- Which of the three self-compassion elements do you find most challenging?
- Can you think of a moment where being kind to yourself helped more than being critical?

Facilitator's Role:

- Guide participants to explore **realistic, personal examples**.

- Gently challenge harsh or punitive thinking.
- Reinforce that practicing self-compassion is **an active recovery skill**, not self-indulgence.

Closing the Exercise

You Say: "Self-compassion might feel uncomfortable at first—especially if you're used to being hard on yourself. But it's a skill worth building. If you'd like, try one of the phrases we used today when something tough comes up this week, and notice how it feels."

Optional Reflection Questions:

- What's one self-compassion phrase you could try this week?
- What would change if you gave yourself more understanding during setbacks?
- How does self-compassion support your recovery goals?

Facilitator Quick Tips:

- Keep it participant-driven—there's no one-size-fits-all approach.
- Gently redirect self-blame or resistance with curiosity, not correction.
- Encourage small steps—just **noticing** a harsh inner voice is a meaningful start.

Summary

Practicing self-compassion can help participants approach recovery with more patience, resilience, and motivation. By integrating **mindfulness**, **common humanity**, and **self-kindness**, they can reduce shame and increase self-efficacy—key ingredients for lasting change.