Two Self-Compassion Practices to Rewire Your Brain for Resilience

Resilience expert Linda Graham presents two ways you can ease anxiety and fear with the research-backed benefits of self-compassion.

1. Try a Self-Compassion Break

This is an exercise in shifting our awareness and bringing acceptance to bear on the experience of the moment, in the moment.

It helps to practice this when emotional upsets are still reasonably manageable—to create and strengthen the neural circuits that can do this shifting and re-conditioning when things get really tough.

- Any moment you notice a surge of a difficult emotion—contempt, remorse, shame—pause and put your hand on your heart (this activates the release of oxytocin, the hormone of safety and trust).

- Empathize with your experience—recognize the suffering and say to yourself, “this is hard!” or “this is scary!” or “this is painful” or something similar, to acknowledge and care about yourself as the experiencer of something distressing.

- Repeat these phrases to yourself (or some variation of words that work better for you):

  *May I be kind to myself in this moment.*
  This breaks the automaticity of our survival responses and negative thought loops.

  *May I accept this moment exactly as it is.*
  From William James, considered the founder of American psychology: “Be willing to have it so. Acceptance of what has happened is the first step to overcoming the consequence of any misfortune.”

  *May I accept myself exactly as I am in this moment.*
  From humanist psychologist Carl Rogers: “The curious paradox is that when I
accept myself exactly as I am, then I can change.”

**May I give myself all the compassion I need.**
Compassion is a resource for resilience, and you are equally as deserving of your own compassion as others are.

- **Continue repeating the phrases** until you can feel the internal shift. The compassion and kindness and care for yourself becoming stronger than the original negative emotion.

- **Pause and reflect on your experience.** Notice if any possibilities of wise action arise.

2. **Explore Self-Compassion as an Ongoing Way of Being**
I often practice an expanded variation of the traditional mindful self-compassion phrases:

**May I be kind to myself in this moment, in any moment, in every moment.**

**May I accept this moment exactly as it is, any moment, every moment.**

**May I accept myself exactly as I am in this moment, in any moment, in every moment.**

**May I give myself all the compassion and courageous action that I need.**

This variation, like the traditional self-compassion break, is completely portable and effective anywhere, anytime. And this variation helps deepen the practice of mindful self-compassion into an ongoing way of being.

Read more about self-compassion and resilience on [mindful.org](https://www.mindful.org/self-compassion-practices-to-deepen-your-resilience/).