

Self-Compassion and Connection Practice

Objective:

This activity aims to help you build self-compassion, process feelings of guilt, and focus on positive interactions through reflective exercises and visualisation. You can engage in these practices at home or as part of daily life to build awareness and self-compassion.

Instructions:

1. **Mental Reflection: Challenge the “Bad Mother” Label**

In moments when you feel like a “bad mother,” take a quiet moment to reflect and mentally recount specific things you did in the situation that show your care and effort, even if you feel the situation didn’t turn out ideally. The aim is to remind yourself that parenting is challenging and complex.

- **Guided Reflection:** “Think of a recent moment when you felt you didn’t meet your own expectations as a mother. Now, list mentally any loving or positive actions you took during that moment, even if things didn’t go perfectly. Acknowledge the good intentions you brought to it.”

2. **Self-Compassion Check-In**

Each morning or evening, take 1–2 minutes to practice self-compassion by repeating phrases that affirm your effort and worth as a parent. Practicing this daily can help build resilience against guilt and criticism.

- **Self-Compassion Phrases:** “I am doing the best I can,” “I care deeply about my son/daughter’s well-being,” or “It’s okay to make mistakes”.

3. **Empathy Visualization: Seeing Through Her/His Eyes**

Visualise your son/daughter’s perspective in calm moments, especially if you anticipate conflict or feel tension arising. By imagining what the son/daughter might be feeling or needing, you can foster empathy, which helps you respond from a place of understanding rather than frustration.

- **Guided Visualisation:** “Close your eyes and imagine yourself in your son/daughter’s shoes. Picture her/him as they navigate their day and consider how she/he might be feeling. What emotions might she/he be going through, and what kind of support could they need? Think of one small way you can respond that shows you understand her.”

4. **Daily Moment of Connection**

Each day, actively notice a small positive interaction with your son/daughter—perhaps a shared smile, a hug, or a relaxed conversation. Reflecting on these moments mentally before bed can help you shift focus from self-criticism to appreciation of these positive interactions.

- **Guided Reflection:** “Before bed, take a moment to think of one positive interaction you shared with your daughter/son today, no matter how small. Let yourself enjoy this memory and feel gratitude for the connection.”

5. “Good Enough” Parenting Mantra

When feelings of guilt or self-doubt arise, mentally repeat a grounding mantra that affirms you are enough. This can be done any time you notice guilt creeping in, especially if you feel overwhelmed by expectations of perfection.

- **Suggested Mantras:** “I am enough,” “I am doing my best,” or “Parenting is a journey; I am learning each day.”

6. Mindfulness Breaks to Reset

During challenging interactions or on particularly stressful days, pause for a short mindfulness exercise to reset. This can involve simply focusing on your breathing or repeating a calming phrase to bring you back to the present.

- **Guided Reset:** “When feeling overwhelmed, pause and take three deep breaths. As you exhale, release any self-criticism or guilt you’re holding. Repeat a calming phrase, such as, ‘I am here for myself, and I am doing my best.’”

Benefits

- **Enhances Self-Compassion:** Builds resilience against self-criticism and guilt by focusing on compassion and self-affirmation.
- **Strengthens Positive Connection:** Encourages intentional bonding moments with the son/daughter, fostering a stronger, more empathetic relationship.
- **Promotes Calmness in Challenging Moments:** Through mindfulness and visualisation, you start to learn to centre yourself and respond calmly, rather than reactively, during challenging interactions.