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Self-Compassion

The antidote to shame is self-compassion, one of the most powerful tools we can use to reduce the effects of trauma and strengthen our emotional, mental, and physical well-being.



Each Saprea Support Group meeting begins with 'Group Leader A' reading the script while participants follow along. The script will be the same for every group meeting. **To find the script, visit supportgroups.saprea.org.** Below are the additional meeting materials for this course.



To watch the intro video for this lesson, scan the QR code or go to <https://vimeo.com/showcase/10293739>.

Group Activity

CELEBRATE YOUR VICTORIES

There is a common misconception that we must be “perfect” or “better” in order to be worthy of compassion—that we are not deserving of it until we overcome our perceived shortcomings, limitations, or failures. Sometimes we may feel that we still have too much work to do or too many flaws to fix before we can allow ourselves grace. But this is not the case. In fact, self-compassion and imperfection go hand-in-hand. **Self-compassion involves recognizing that suffering and perceived inadequacy are part of the shared human experience.**

Self-compassion not only involves acknowledging this suffering and the things you'd like to do differently. It also involves **acknowledging your victories and what you have already achieved today.**

Because the healing journey is an ongoing process, personal victories achieved along the way can go unnoticed. You might have days where you feel you've made little progress in your healing. You might get frustrated and impatient, focusing on doubts, struggles, and setbacks you've experienced. These kinds of thoughts and feelings can happen instinctively, which is why **it's important to practice self-compassion and recognize that no matter where you are or what you've done (or haven't done), you are strong and resilient now.**

Today's activity is about highlighting your present strength, courage, and impact. Similar to how you've been sharing a personal triumph during each check-in, this activity centers around noticing the good things you are already achieving every day and practicing self-kindness in the face of difficulties.

ACTIVITY STEPS

- 01 Look back at either today or yesterday and identify at least three victories you've achieved.**

This could be anything you see as a personal triumph, no matter how small it may seem. Some examples might be:

 - I got out of bed.
 - I finished a project.
 - I took a breath to ground myself.
 - I held a boundary.
 - I tried something new.
 - I made progress on something important to me.
 - I gave myself a compliment.
 - I set aside time for self-care and/or play.
 - I told my kids I loved them.
 - I practiced safe touch.
 - I engaged my body in movement.
 - I ran an errand.
 - I spent time outside.
 - I noticed something beautiful and positive.
 - I practiced self-compassion.
- 02 Take a moment after listing your three triumphs to appreciate your actions from today or yesterday.**

Similar to the activity “Your Future Self Will Thank You,” you may decide to write a short message to your past self, thanking them for the personal triumphs they achieved and for practicing Aspiration through healing thoughts and actions.
- 03 Make a plan to repeat this activity at the end of the day, taking time before bed to look back and identify a victory you've achieved.** You could also keep track of these observations by writing them in a gratitude journal. When you are feeling down on yourself or struggling to practice self-compassion, refer to this journal to remind yourself of all the victories you have achieved. You could also try incorporating your victories into art journaling or other types of creative expression.
- 04** If you later feel you are not in the headspace to reflect back on your triumphs from the day, **try an activity that seems more doable and calming**, such as coloring, working on a puzzle, brushing your teeth, taking a shower, or laying out your clothes for the next day. As you do the activity, giving yourself time and space to simply be, occasionally direct your thoughts back to the day you just had and the triumphs you achieved. If you are still having difficulty thinking of a victory, you can write down the calming activity you just engaged in and the effort you put into fostering self-compassion.



Note: You can get more out of this activity by making it a daily practice. However, anytime is a good time to appreciate your personal triumphs.

Grounding Exercise

BUTTERFLY HUG

The butterfly hug—sometimes referred to as the “self-love hug”—is an example of sensory grounding involving touch. It is also a self-soothing technique you can use any time you’re feeling stressed, anxious, or triggered.

Activity Steps

- 01** Get into a comfortable position, either sitting up or lying down.
- 02** Cross your arms over your chest and rest the tips of your fingers on your collarbone, shoulders, or arms.
- 03** Next, gently tap your arms, alternating sides. As you do so, breathe in and out.
- 04** Continue this exercise for 2–5 minutes or as long as you need to.
- 05** When you are done, rest your hands on your lap and let your attention come back to the present moment.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

If you are interested in learning more, we invite you to explore the following articles in the Online Healing Resources section of our website at saprea.org.

- **FEELINGS OF SHAME**
- **SELF-COMPASSION**
- **CHALLENGING COGNITIVE DISTORTIONS**

NEXT TOPIC:

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POWER OF PLAY—PART 3

Play can help you find joy in your everyday life right now, even when you feel that you are unworthy or unable to have such experiences. The more you play, the easier it will be to allow yourself these moments of self-care and childlike wonder in the future.