WORKSHEET 124 · FOR THE PSYCHOLOGIST

The three pillars of self-compassion

Mindfulness, common humanity, kindness

AIM

Introduce the three components of self-compassion according to Neff and apply them to a real difficult situation, contrasting them with their opposites (self-criticism, isolation, over-identification).

WHO IT IS FOR

Self-criticism, perfectionism, shame, failures experienced as proof of one's worth.

DURATION

15-20 min

HOW TO RUN IT

1. Introduce the three pillars and their opposites: mindfulness / over-identification, common humanity / isolation, kindness / self-criticism.
2. The person chooses a recent, moderately difficult situation.
3. For each pillar, they note what they usually tell themselves and what they could say instead.
4. Ask them to say the sentences aloud and observe the effect in the body.

POINTS TO WATCH

> In people who are very self-critical or who have experienced abuse, self-kindness can at first bring up sadness, discomfort or mistrust (the "backdraft" described by Germer and Neff). This is to be expected: go more slowly, in small doses, and validate the difficulty.

REFERENCES

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Neff, K. D. & Germer, C. K. (2013). A pilot study and randomized controlled trial of the Mindful Self-Compassion program. Journal of Clinical Psychology, 69(1), 28-44.

PSYCHOLOGIST'S NOTES

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WORKSHEET 124 · WORKSHEET TO HAND OUT

The three pillars of self-compassion

Self-compassion is treating yourself in difficulty the way you would treat someone you love. The psychologist Kristin Neff describes three pillars: recognising the suffering, remembering you are not alone and speaking to yourself kindly.

1. The difficult situation I am thinking about: _____
2. For each pillar, first note what you usually tell yourself.
3. Then write what you could tell yourself instead.
4. Read your three sentences quietly, with a hand on your chest if it helps.

Pillar	What I usually tell myself	What I could tell myself

What I notice (in my body, in my emotions) when I read the new sentences:

These exercises do not replace therapy. If you are in distress or having suicidal thoughts: 112 (European Union), 3114 (France) or the emergency number of the country where you live.

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