WORKSHEET 22 · FOR THE PSYCHOLOGIST

Talking to myself as I would to a friend

The self-compassion break for anxiety

AIM

Replace the self-criticism that often comes with anxiety and rumination ("I'm pathetic for worrying about this") with a kind attitude towards oneself, without complacency.

WHO IT IS FOR

Self-criticism, perfectionism, shame about anxiety. Adults and adolescents.

DURATION

10 min in session; 2-3 min on your own

HOW TO RUN IT

1. Identify the self-critical voice: what does the person tell themselves when anxious? In what tone?
2. Ask what they would say to a close friend in the same situation, and in what tone.
3. Guide the three steps of the break: acknowledging the suffering, remembering that it is part of human experience, saying a kind sentence to oneself.
4. Help them find their own sentence, one that rings true for them.
5. Suggest a soothing gesture (hand on the chest or the arm) if it suits them.

POINTS TO WATCH

> Self-kindness may at first bring up sadness or resistance ("I don't deserve it"): this is common, welcome it. Don't present it as self-indulgence: you can be kind and demanding at the same time.

REFERENCES

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.

Neff, K. D. (2011). Self-Compassion: Stop Beating Yourself Up and Leave Insecurity Behind. William Morrow.

PSYCHOLOGIST'S NOTES

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WORKSHEET 22 · WORKSHEET TO HAND OUT

Talking to myself as I would to a friend

When we are anxious, we often speak to ourselves harshly. Yet we would speak differently to a friend in the same situation. This break invites you to speak to yourself as you would to someone you love.

1. Acknowledge: “This is a difficult moment. Right now it hurts / I’m afraid.”
2. Remember: “I’m not alone. Everyone goes through moments like this.”
3. Support myself: “What do I need to hear?” Say a kind, true sentence to yourself.
4. If it helps, put a hand on your chest or on your arm.

What I tell myself when I’m anxious	What I would say to a friend	My own sentence

My kind sentence, the one that rings true for me:

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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