

Think Of A Friend

This tool works best without knowing its exact purpose. Just take some time to reply to all of the questions and really think about whatever you write down. Then proceed to explanations.

 Self-Criticism  15 Minutes  Starter

When a close friend feels really bad about him or herself or is really struggling in some way, how would you respond to your friend in this situation? What would you typically do and say? What would be the tone you use to talk?

Now think about times when you feel bad about yourself or are struggling. How do you typically respond to yourself in these situations? What do you typically do and say? What is the tone in which you talk to yourself?

Do you see any differences between your two answers?

Explanations

Now that you have reflected on what you wrote down, do you notice any **differences** in how you judged **yourself** after wrongdoing versus what you would tell a **good friend** in the same situation? Do you notice what happened?

Here is an explanation:

When putting ourselves down, we often embrace a **double standard**. That is, we treat ourselves more harshly than we would treat a friend if they made the same mistake as we did.

If you truly think about it, it just doesn't make sense. Instead of putting ourselves down, we would be so much better off being the same good friend to ourselves that we are to others. We do not tell our friends that they are stupid or incapable if they make a mistake. They aren't a complete failure or will never do better. We tell them that it wasn't so bad, that it doesn't make them a less valuable or loved person, and that they will do better next time. We do that because we are compassionate and because we want them to feel better about themselves.

What can you learn from this?

Instead of putting yourself down, talk to yourself **in the same compassionate way** you might talk to a dear friend who was upset.

Ask yourself how things might change if you did that. The next time you struggle, try and take a step back and be kind to yourself. You will almost certainly find that this makes you feel better and helps you to think clearly and constructively.

