



9 Paths to Self-Compassion

By Renée Siegel

Valentine's Day is often thought of as a time we express and celebrate our love for others. We've all heard that we can only love others to the extent we have learned to love ourselves. If this is true, we are often unable to love others because we could all do better with loving ourselves.

Is there a difference between self-compassion and self-love?

Perhaps there is a minor distinction in that self-love is a feeling of lovingkindness toward oneself. Self-compassion is the feeling of caring for oneself and the desire to take action on that feeling

Definition of Self-Compassion

Extending the same loving kindness to one's self that you would extend to another when we feel imperfect, unlovable, like a failure, too dramatic or needy, separate from afraid, unable to focus, too aggressive or angry and perhaps too lazy as well as so many other self-deprecating thoughts and emotions and actions we have and take toward ourselves.

The Dalai Lama once said that "compassion is a necessity, not a luxury and that it is a question of human survival. Compassion is a process of connecting by identifying with another person.

This identification with others through compassion can lead to increased motivation to do something in an effort to relieve the suffering of others.

Therefore, self-compassion is a process of connecting with ourselves by identifying with ourselves.

This is where the enneagram is so helpful. Our ability to identify with ourselves is assisted by understanding the characteristics of our type, sometimes referred to as personality. Personality traits, however, are not really who we are they are just the way we have learned to move through life. Each of the 9 enneatypes has developed a



strategy to blind us from our unique aspect of divine essence. Each type has both a cognitive and an emotional method as well as unique defense mechanisms that keep us from self-compassion.

What's the difference between empathy, sympathy and self-compassion?

Sympathy is feeling badly for another person.

Empathy is feeling some or many of the same emotions that another may have.

Compassion is feeling empathy and compelled to take action because of that empathy.

Compassion is motivated from the three instinctual drives:

Seeking power and control

Seeking esteem and affirmation

Seeking safety and security

Within each of these three instinctual triads each of the three types has a unique path to compassion. Each is motivated by embracing that which we avoid in an attempt, counter-intuitive as it is, to return to a state of wholeness.

Discuss the state of essence collapsing into a contraction in order to be in the human body and the personality development necessary to function in this world.



Power and Control

Type 8

Aspect of Divine Essence - Power

Avoiding weakness

Defense Mechanism of Denial

False Belief that "I am All Powerful"

Type 9

Aspect of Divine Essence - Peace

Avoiding conflict

Defense Mechanism of Narcotization

False Belief that "I Am Settled"

Type 1

Aspect of Divine Essence - Goodness

Avoiding mistakes

Defense Mechanism of Reaction Formation

False Belief that "I Am Right"



Esteem and Affirmation

Type 2

Aspect of Divine Essence - Love

Avoiding needs

Defense Mechanism of Repression

False Belief of "I Am Helpful"

Type 3

Aspect of Divine Essence - Efficacy

Avoiding failure

Defense Mechanism of Identification

False Belief of "I Am Successful"

Type 4

Aspect of Divine Essence - Originality

Avoiding Ordinarity

Defense Mechanism of Introjection

False Belief that "I Am Special"



Safety and Security

Type 5

Aspect of Divine Essence - Wisdom

Avoiding Emptiness

Defense Mechanism of Isolation

False Belief of "I Am Perceptive"

Type 6

Aspect of Divine Essence - Loyalty

Avoiding doubt

Defense Mechanism of Projection

False Belief of "I Am Compliant"

Type 7

Aspect of Divine Essence - Joy

Avoiding Pain

Defense Mechanism of Rationalization

False Belief of "I Am Okay"



Exercise Part - 1

To be done in dyads with the question asking person recording answers for the person being asked the questions.

Based on my type, I am aware that I avoid:

Others tell me that I avoid:

I am aware of my defensiveness when I:

Others tell me I am defensive when I:

Others tell me I am too hard on myself when I either say or act in the following way:

I am aware that I compensate by acting in the following way when I do not feel good about myself:



Exercise Part 2

To be done in dyads with the question asking person recording answers for the person being asked the questions.

There are several challenges in moving toward self-compassion. They include self-care, experiencing vulnerability, patience, curiosity, tolerance and acceptance. You may recognize some of these areas as challenging to your character structure or type.

Two essential ingredients for staying on the path to growing self-compassion are developing self-awareness and cultivating a practice using your inner observer. Being mindful and seeing yourself as part of human kind are really helpful too.

Consider just one of the challenges above that you experience and ask yourself the following question? What would I tell someone that was experiencing this challenge about addressing it in the kindest way possible?



Again, consider this challenge and spend two minutes seeing yourself treating yourself this way. Write down anything you notice or that comes up as a challenge in doing so.

Now, silently repeat to yourself for just one minute the following statement.....

I understand that it is difficult for me to (whatever the challenge is). I will tell myself what I would tell my friend to do when this comes up again.