Soothing Touch

Soothing touch is a brief self-compassion practice that uses gentle contact to help your body feel supported during stress, overwhelm, or emotional pain.

The practice is flexible: use the kind of touch that feels steadying, skip body touch entirely, or stop whenever it does not feel supportive.

WHY IT MAY HELP

Warmth and pressure Gentle contact can make care feel more physical and immediate.	**Stress regulation** Supportive touch may help reduce physiological arousal, including a racing heart.
Safety and connection Touch can cue comfort and connection through systems associated with soothing and bonding.	**Less reliance on words** It can be useful when kind phrases feel inaccessible or your body needs support first.

A SIMPLE HAND-ON-HEART PRACTICE

1	Pause. Let your breathing slow naturally. You do not need to force a deep breath.
2	Place one hand over your chest. Try both hands only if that feels better.
3	Notice the warmth, weight, and pressure of your hand.
4	Stay for a few breaths. Small circular movements are optional.
5	Stop when you have had enough. Even a few seconds counts.

WHEN TO TRY IT

• After a mistake	• During overwhelm	• When self-talk turns harsh
• Before pushing through	• After conflict or rejection	• When words are not helping

Find the Touch That Works for You

Hand-on-heart is only one option. Different gestures may feel better depending on the day, your sensory preferences, and your history with touch.

CHEST + ABDOMEN	FACE + ARMS	HANDS + OBJECTS
• One hand on chest • Both hands on chest • One hand on abdomen • One hand on chest and one on abdomen	• Hand on cheek • Cradle face in hands • Stroke arms gently • Cross arms and give a light squeeze	• Cup one hand in the other • Press palms together • Hug a pillow • Hold a soft or textured object

WHAT TO NOTICE

- Did your shoulders, jaw, or breathing soften?
- Did the touch feel comforting, neutral, awkward, irritating, or unsafe?
- Did you want more pressure, less pressure, or no touch?
- Did your thoughts slow down, even slightly?

ADJUST THE PRACTICE

- Keep your eyes open.
- Use contact over clothing.
- Use a pillow, blanket, or object instead of touching your body.
- Shorten the practice to a few seconds.
- Stop and return later.

IF TOUCH DOES NOT FEEL SOOTHING

That response is information, not failure. Touch can feel uncomfortable because of sensory sensitivity, trauma, pain, body discomfort, or simply personal preference. Try warmth, pressure from an object, movement, or another form of support instead.

The most supportive version is the one your body can tolerate and choose.