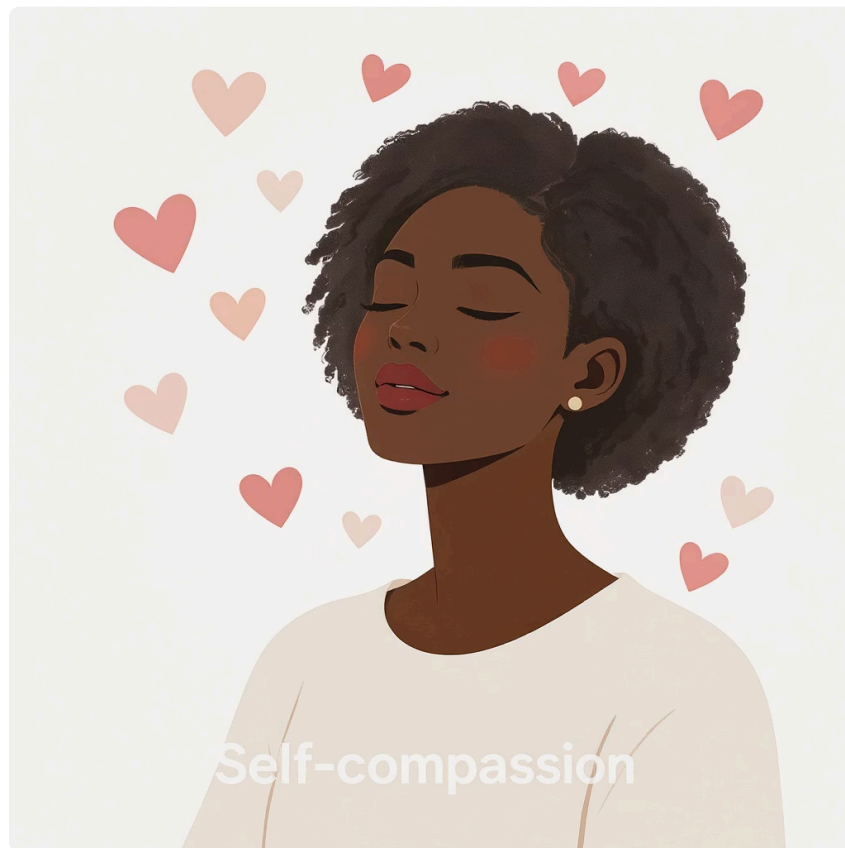


# 🌻 FLOURISH WORKBOOK 6

## Self-Compassion & ADHD

Being on your own side, one small moment at a time



## Introduction

Self-compassion is rarely something ADHD women are taught in therapy or coaching. But it's one of the most essential places to begin healing.

After years of **internalized shame**, **overfunctioning**, and pressure to "fix" yourself , the idea of being kind and warm to yourself may feel confusing or even unsafe.

But learning to support yourself and be on your own side is a critical foundation for healing.

This workbook explores what self-compassion really means, why it can feel so difficult to access, and how to begin practicing it in small supportive practices.

## What You'll Learn

This workbook will help you:

- Understand why self-compassion is essential for ADHD women
- Learn some of the brain science behind self-kindness, including stress, safety, and healing
- Identify the moments when you need compassion most and what to do in those moments
- Practice small, doable acts of compassion that support ADHD brains
- Understand why it can be hard to be kind to yourself
- Learn the three core components of self-compassion: mindfulness, common humanity, and self-kindness
- Begin to unlearn internalized beliefs that make compassion feel unsafe or undeserved

## What Is Self-Compassion?

Self-compassion means responding to your own pain with care instead of criticism.

Many of us learned to be hard on ourselves. We were taught that self-criticism would keep us motivated, help us do better, or stop us from making mistakes. But for many ADHD women, that pattern adds more shame, stress, and exhaustion.

Self-compassion begins with noticing that you are struggling. It means remembering that suffering, mistakes, and overwhelm are part of being human. And it means asking, "What do I need right now?" and responding in a supportive way.

That could look like speaking to yourself more gently, lowering the demand, taking a break, or offering yourself understanding instead of blame.

## The Three Components of Self-Compassion

There is a simple model developed by researcher Kristin Neff that helps explain self-compassion clearly. It includes three parts:

### **Mindfulness**

Noticing what you are feeling instead of ignoring it, denying it, or getting pulled fully into it. Even pausing to say, "This is hard" or "I am struggling right now" is a form of mindfulness.

### **Common Humanity**

Remembering that struggle is part of being human. You are not the only one who finds things hard, feels overwhelmed, or makes mistakes. This part helps interrupt the feeling that you are alone in what you are going through.

### **Self-Kindness**

Choosing to respond to yourself with care instead of criticism. It means using a gentler tone, offering understanding, and asking what might help rather than adding more blame, even if that feels unfamiliar at first.

# How Self Compassion Helps

## Emotional Well-Being

Self-compassion is linked with lower levels of sadness, guilt, and stress. It can also help people feel more emotionally steady and less overwhelmed by difficult thoughts.

## Motivation and Self-Worth

Many people worry that being kind to themselves will make them less motivated. Research suggests the opposite. Self-compassion can support motivation because it lowers the fear of failure and makes it easier to recover from mistakes, try again, and keep learning.

## Procrastination and ADHD

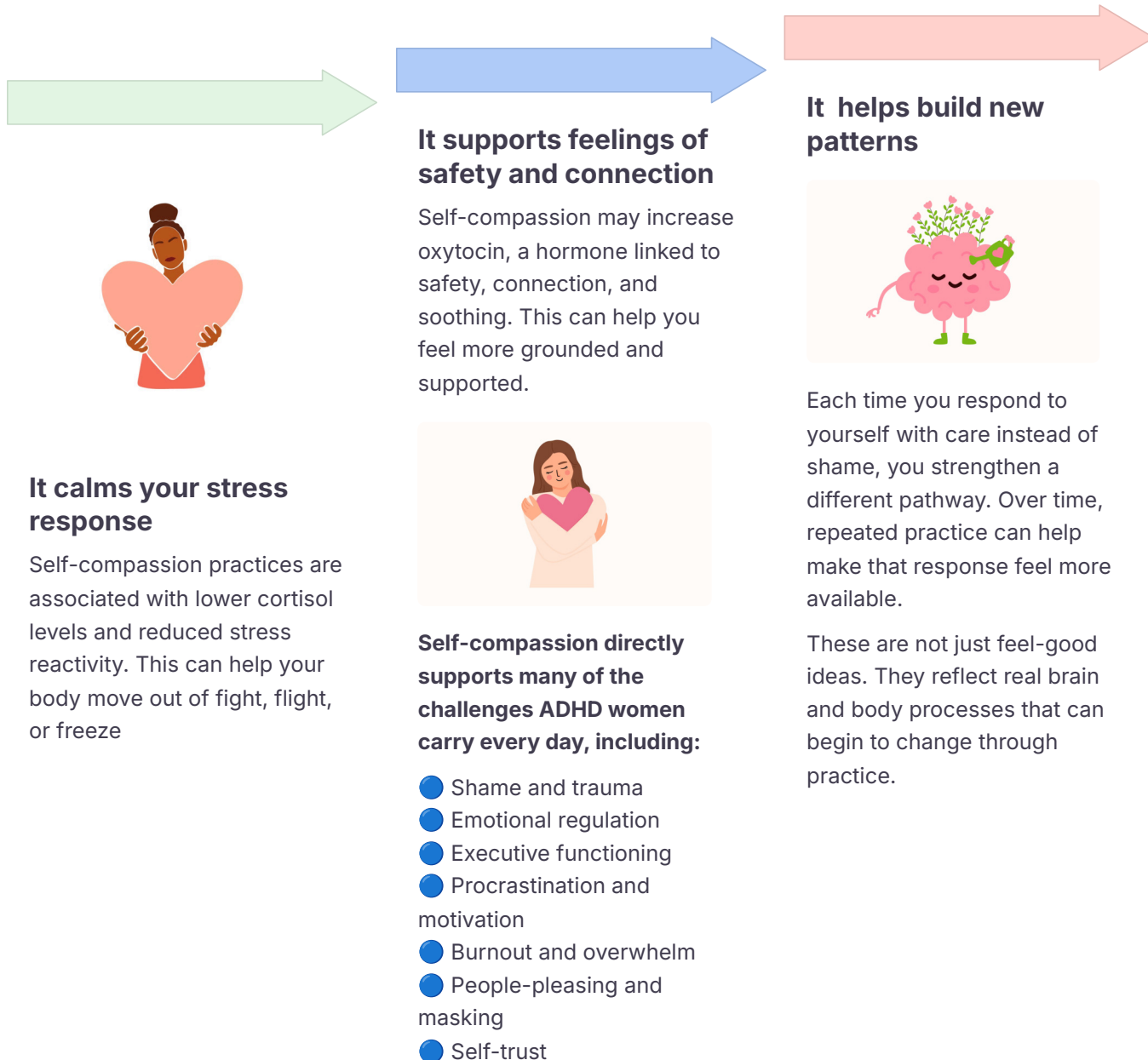
Procrastination is not always about distraction or poor time management. Often, it is tied to fear, shame, perfectionism, or dread about getting something wrong. Harsh self-talk tends to increase that stress and make it harder to begin. Self-compassion helps reduce the emotional weight around the task, which can make starting and following through feel more possible.

## Rumination

Self-compassion can also help with rumination. Rumination is when your mind gets stuck on mistakes, painful experiences, or self-critical thoughts and has trouble moving on. Responding to yourself with care instead of criticism can help interrupt that loop.

## Here's how Self-Compassion Helps

Self-compassion is not just a comforting idea. It can also affect how your body and mind respond to stress.



## Why Self-Compassion Feels Hard for ADHD Women

ADHD women often carry years of shame, missed diagnosis, and pressure to mask. These experiences can make self-kindness feel unsafe, unfamiliar, or not allowed.

Do any of these patterns feel familiar?

- 1 You use self-criticism as a motivator**
- 2 You feel guilty or undeserving of rest**
- 3 You've been praised for pushing through, but never for taking care of yourself**
- 4 You fear seeming lazy, selfish, or weak if you slow down**

These are learned beliefs and survival patterns. They make perfect sense.

## Quick Check-In: What Do You Believe?

Which of these feel familiar?

- I've used self-criticism to try and motivate myself
- I feel uncomfortable being kind to myself
- I was never been taught how to be kind to myself
- I believe compassion is for *other* people, just not for me
- I want to believe I deserve it, but it still feels unfamiliar

These beliefs can shift over time. Most people do not unlearn them all at once. They begin to change through practice.

## Why We Resist Self-Compassion

If you find yourself resisting self-compassion, you're not alone.

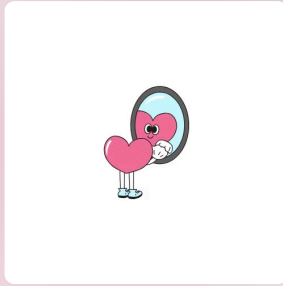
That reaction makes perfect sense.

For many ADHD women, self-compassion doesn't come naturally.

It can feel confusing, unfamiliar, or even unsafe! There are good reasons for that.







## Reflection: When Positive Emotions Don't feel Safe

If you have been hurt after feeling joy, pride, or ease about yourself, your brain may have learned to shut those feelings down. This is something many ADHD women experience. You may notice thoughts like, "I should not feel this," or "Something bad will happen if I let myself feel good."

You might tense up when positive feelings start to come in, or pull away from them entirely.

You might ask yourself: Do I feel uneasy when I start to feel good about myself, as if I am waiting for the other shoe to drop or for someone to criticize me?

---

---

---

---

---

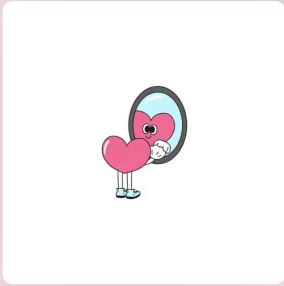
---

---

---

---

---



## Reflection: harmful cultural messages.

As a neurodivergent woman, you've likely been taught to:



**Put others' needs first—  
even at your own  
expense**



**People-please to stay  
safe or fit in**



**See rest, pride, or self-  
kindness as selfish or  
indulgent**

**You might reflect:**

Where did I learn that being kind to myself is wrong?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Who benefits when I believe that?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



## Common Self-Compassion Myths

You might notice some of these beliefs coming up as you try to be kinder to yourself. They are common, and they are not accurate.

### **Myth: Self-compassion makes you lazy**

- Truth: It supports motivation by reducing fear and stress.

### **Myth: It means letting yourself off the hook**

- Truth: It helps you take responsibility without adding shame.

### **Myth: If I am kind to myself, I will never get anything done**

- Truth: Self-compassion reduces avoidance and makes follow-through more likely.

### **Myth: It is just self-pity**

- Truth: It helps you name what is happening and move forward without getting stuck.

### **Myth: It is selfish**

- Truth: It protects your energy so you can show up more consistently for yourself and others.

These beliefs often come from how you were taught to function, not from what actually supports change.

## Activity: Self-Compassion VS Self-Criticism

Sometimes the fastest way to understand self-compassion is to compare it directly with what most ADHD women are used to: self-criticism.

**Notice which column feels more familiar.**

<b>Self-Compassion</b>	<b>Self-Criticism</b>
<b>Reduces shame</b>	<b>Increases shame and self-doubt</b>
Supports motivation and task initiation	Fuels procrastination and avoidance
Helps regulate the nervous system	Triggers fight/flight/freeze responses
Improves emotional regulation	Intensifies emotional overwhelm
Encourages self-accommodation and pacing	Promotes perfectionism and overfunctioning
Builds self-trust and resilience	Erodes confidence and self-worth
Makes it easier to recover from mistakes	Keeps you stuck in rumination and guilt
Creates space for rest and sustainable effort	Drives burnout and masking
Increases follow-through over time	Decreases executive functioning and focus
Strengthens body-based cues for needs	Disconnects you from your body and intuition
Makes it safer to unmask and be authentic	Reinforces masking and people-pleasing

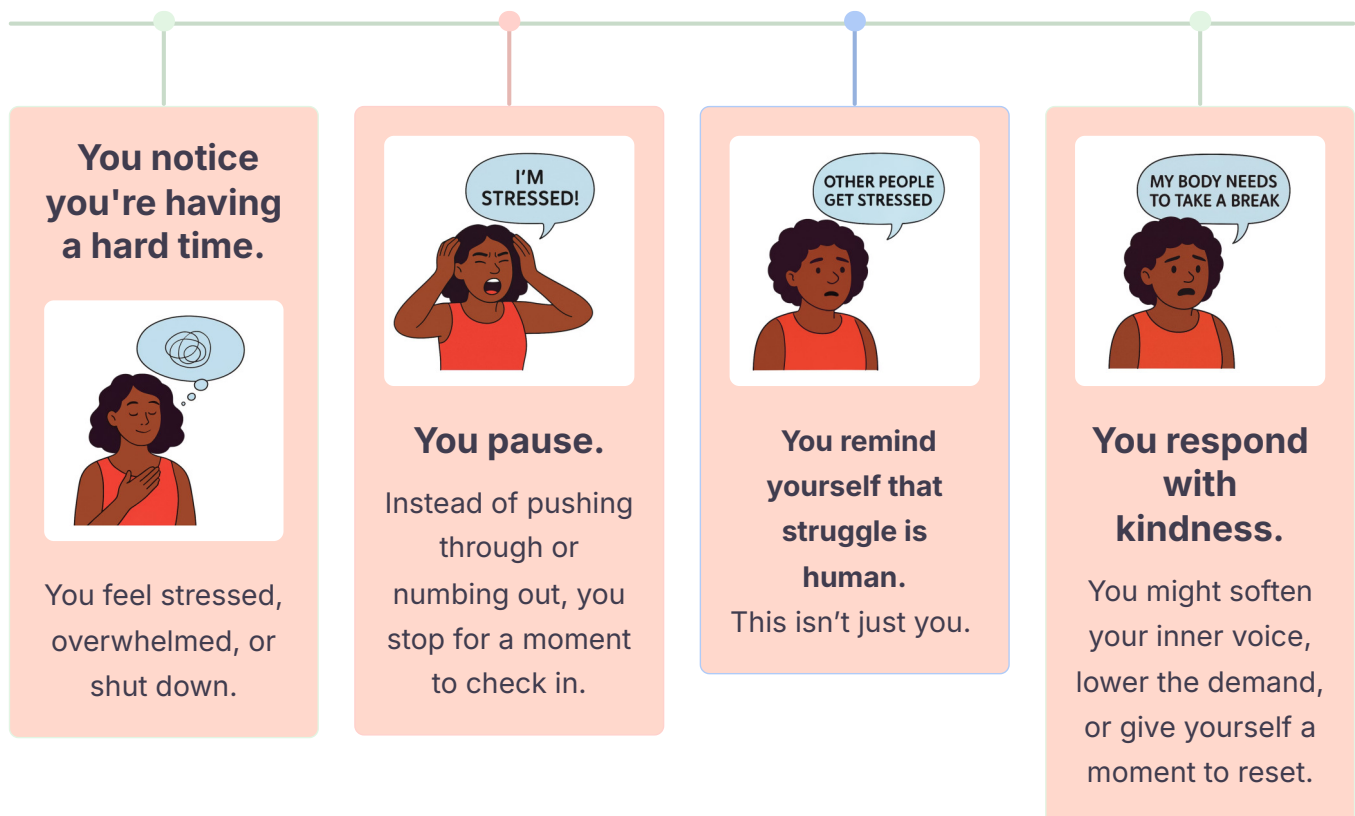
Most ADHD women were taught the right column. This work is about slowly building access to the left.

## What Self-Compassion *Actually* Looks Like

You've learned how self-compassion can be helpful, but what does it look like in daily life?

Self-compassion means noticing when you're in pain, remembering you're not alone, and responding with care.

Here's how that might show up:



Self-compassion means treating yourself with the same care you would offer someone you value. You do not have to do it perfectly. You build this skill over time. This is not a mindset shift. It is a moment-by-moment response.

## Self-Compassion Sounds, Feels, and Looks Like....

Sometimes it helps to ground a concept in real experience. Self-compassion is not just an idea. It can have a sound, a feel, and a look.

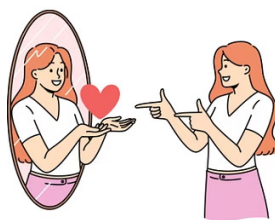
### It might sound like:

**"This is hard, but I'm not alone."**

**"Of course I feel overwhelmed. This is a lot."**

**"It's okay to be human."**

**"I'm noticing that I'm being hard on myself, and that hurts."**



**It might feel like:**

**A blanket around your shoulders**



**The warmth of a cup of tea**



**Relief that you don't have to push so hard**



**A breath that allows your chest to soften**



These may feel subtle. That is often how safety begins in the body.

# Activity

## It might look like:

- 1 — Taking a short break before you're completely drained
- 2 — Softening your tone when talking to yourself
- 3 — Reaching for a sensory tool or soothing gesture
- 4 — Letting yourself stop, even if the task isn't done

## You Might Pause Here

Is there one you'd like to try when you're struggling?

Small gestures count. Even noticing them is a start.

The word "Activity" is written in a colorful, playful font. The letters are in various colors: 'A' is orange with a star, 'c' is blue, 't' is red, 'i' is purple, 'v' is blue, 'i' is purple, and 't' is red. The letters are slightly tilted and have a soft shadow.

## Checklist: When Do You Need Self-Compassion?

It is not always easy to notice when you need self-compassion. Many people miss those moments.

If you are used to pushing through, minimizing your needs, or blaming yourself when things feel hard, these moments can be even harder to recognize.

The next pages include examples of common triggers where self-compassion may be needed.

You will also see blank spaces to add your own.

## Checklist: When Do You Need Self-Compassion?

- Making a small mistake and blaming myself
- Feeling tired, overstimulated, or hungry
- Getting stuck in traffic or arriving late
- Forgetting something important
- Lying awake and getting frustrated that I cannot sleep
- A project or plan not turning out how I hoped
- Scrolling too long and criticizing myself afterward
- Not finishing my to-do list and feeling like a failure
- Comparing myself to others and feeling behind

 Your Everyday Triggers: \_\_\_\_\_

 Your Everyday Triggers: \_\_\_\_\_

 Your Everyday Triggers: \_\_\_\_\_

## Bigger Emotional Triggers

- Feeling extremely overwhelmed
- Having a disagreement with someone I care about
- Feeling sadness, anger, or shame
- Someone being unkind to me
- Getting emotionally dysregulated and feeling like I cannot calm down
- Procrastinating or avoiding what I need to do
- People-pleasing, masking, or silencing myself
- Being sick or in pain and trying to push through
- Feeling like giving up or wanting to start over
- My inner voice turning harsh, cold, or unforgiving

 Your Bigger Triggers: \_\_\_\_\_

 Your Bigger Triggers: \_\_\_\_\_

 Your Bigger Triggers: \_\_\_\_\_

**Reminder:** Every one of these moments is a valid place to pause and offer compassion. No moment is too big or too small.

## Part 2

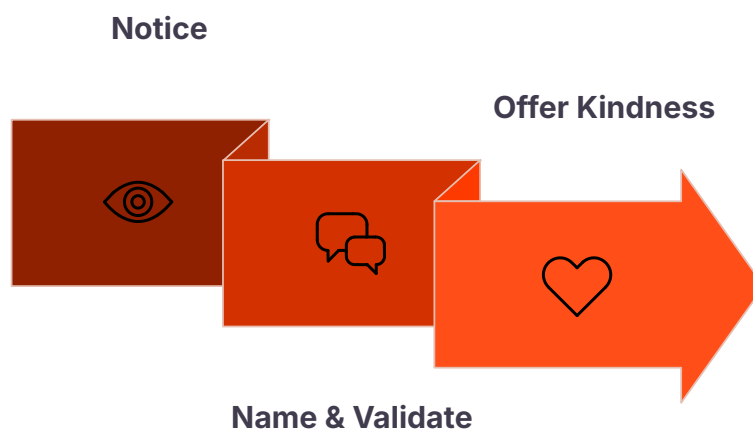
# Learning New Self-Compassion Practices



## Practicing Self-Compassion

These practices follow a simple sequence:

- You notice that you are struggling
- You pause, name what is happening, and validate it
- You offer yourself a kind phrase or supportive thought



They are simple, body-based, and designed to work with ADHD brains.

Try them in everyday moments.

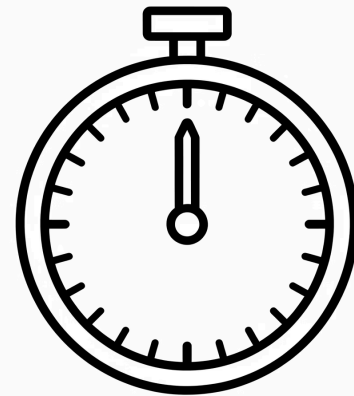
There is no perfect way to begin.

# Activity

## Self-Compassion Practice 1: Timer Check-Ins

Before you can offer yourself compassion, you have to notice that you need it. This is the first step: mindfulness.

You can use timer check-ins, or you can begin asking yourself how you are doing whenever you feel off, overwhelmed, or unsure.



📄 Ask:

“ How am I feeling? ”

“ What do I need? ”

“ What might help right now? ”

You don't have to fix anything. Just check in.

## To Begin Building the Skill, Try This:



- Set an alarm once or twice a day. Start small.
- When it goes off, pause and ask yourself the questions above.
- Notice what you are feeling and what might help.

# Activity

## Self-Compassion Practice 2: Pause and Name

Once you've noticed that something feels off, the next step is to name what's happening. That alone can interrupt a spiral.

This might sound like:

**"This is a hard moment."**

**"I'm feeling overwhelmed."**

**"That really hurt."**

**"I don't know what I need, but I know I'm struggling."**

Just pause. Identify what is happening and name it.

Even saying, "I do not like how this feels," is a strong first step.

## Validate

👉 Then gently add:

**"Of course I feel this way."**

**"It makes sense that I'm confused about how I feel."**

**"This reaction makes sense."**

Your emotions are real. They need to be noticed and accepted before they can be regulated and cared for.

This kind of validation can begin to soften the shame response.



### Self-Compassion Practice 3: Finding Kind Phrases

Now that you have noticed and named what you are feeling, the next step is to offer yourself a kind phrase. These are gentle reminders that you deserve support.

You do not need to say something you do not believe. Start with what feels possible, believable, and real to you.



## Phrases to Experiment With

**"This is hard. I'm doing the best I can."**

**"It's okay to feel tired."**

**"My worth isn't based on productivity."**

**"I'm not lazy."**

**"I deserve support."**

**"I don't need to be perfect."**

**"I'm not a robot. I need rest."**

**"Everyone makes mistakes."**

**"I want to be kinder to myself."**

**"I hope I can learn to be gentle with myself."**



Yours: \_\_\_\_\_

—



Yours: \_\_\_\_\_

—



Yours: \_\_\_\_\_

—



**You can also try simple wishes:**

**"May I learn to give myself a little grace."**

**"May I feel safe and supported."**

**"May I learn to believe that I'm doing enough."**

 Yours: \_\_\_\_\_

 Yours: \_\_\_\_\_

 Yours: \_\_\_\_\_

Start with one or two. See how they feel.



## Quick Recap: 3 Self-Compassion Practices

### 1. Notice

#### Pause and ask:

Pause and ask:

- How am I feeling?
- What do I need?

### 2. Name & Validate

#### Say what's happening:

- "This is hard."
- "I feel overwhelmed."

#### Add validation:

- "Of course I feel this way."
- "This reaction makes sense."

### 3. Kind Phrase

#### Offer support:

- "I am doing my best."
- "It is okay to rest."
- "Everyone makes mistakes."



## When Self-Compassion Feels Hard: Backdraft

Sometimes, offering yourself kindness brings up pain instead of comfort. This response is called **backdraft**, and it is a normal part of healing.

### What Is Backdraft?

Backdraft happens when you begin treating yourself with more kindness, but your mind and body react with fear, discomfort, or distress.

If you have spent years being hard on yourself, kindness can feel unfamiliar or even unsafe.

## Your nervous system might respond with:



1

**Guilt or grief**

2

**Thoughts like:**

*"I don't deserve this"*

*"This is too much"*

3

Tight chest, lump in the throat, heat, or pressure

4

**Intrusive memories or images**

## Why Backdraft happens

Many ADHD women survive by pushing through, criticizing themselves, or hiding their needs. Shifting toward kindness can feel uncomfortable because it is unfamiliar.

Backdraft is what can happen when parts of you react to that discomfort.

## How to Manage Backdraft



**Name it out loud:**

*"This is backdraft."*



**Name the feeling if you can:**

"This is shame."  
 "This is sadness."  
 "This is fear."



**Notice it in your body:**

- Tightness
- Heat
- Pressure
- A lump in the throat
- A wave of tension or shutdown



**Offer comforting touch:**

- Place a hand on your chest
- Hug a pillow
- Press your palms together



**Redirect gently:**

- Fold laundry
- Take a walk
- Hold something textured
- Sit with a sensory support item

These steps can help you stay grounded without being overwhelmed.



## You Might Pause Here

If something in this section stood out to you, take a moment to check in.

**Have you noticed backdraft while practicing self-compassion?**

You can write about it here, if you would like.

---

---

---

---

There is nothing to fix here. Just notice what is present.

## Flourish Shift

Self-compassion is not indulgent. It is necessary.

It helps your nervous system settle, rebuilds trust in yourself, and supports more sustainable change.



## Closing Reflection: You Did Something Brave

You have just completed a workbook on something many people were never taught to do: respond to themselves with care.

In this workbook, you explored what self-compassion means, why it can feel difficult, and how it supports ADHD women.

You looked at how harsh self-talk can shape stress, shame, and overwhelm.

You practiced noticing what is happening, naming it, and responding with more care.

You also learned about backdraft and why self-kindness can sometimes bring up discomfort instead of relief.

This work is not about doing self-compassion perfectly. It is about beginning to build a different relationship with yourself.

## What's Next: Workbook 6 – Rejection Sensitivity

Self-compassion is not the end of this work. It is part of the foundation for what comes next.

In the next workbook, we will look at rejection sensitivity and why it can feel so intense for many ADHD women.

We will explore:

- Why rejection sensitivity can feel so powerful in ADHD
- How shame and self-criticism can intensify the cycle
- What rejection sensitivity can feel like in the body and nervous system
- How self-compassion can help you respond with more steadiness and care
- Practical tools for working with rejection, whether it is real, perceived, or anticipated

Each workbook builds on the one before it. This one helps lay the groundwork for the next.