

For LLRC, 4<sup>th</sup> October 2025

# Resources & References

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Compassion Journalling:  
Writing as a Practice of  
Self-Compassion and Resilience

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I'm not talking about a half-hearted  
following the words but not the meaning  
type of listening, that uses only one ear  
And the occasional Oh, I see.  
That type of listening you come across  
every day of the week.

No, what I'm singing my hymn of praise to  
Is a higher form of communication altogether.  
I'm talking about employing all the tools at our disposal:  
two ears, two eyes, the heart, the gut,  
that place inside where compassion and empathy lie.

I'm talking about a whole body receptor  
tuning into what the speaker is saying,  
not just to their voice but to the silence

when they pause to search for a word,  
their eyes and body speaking  
eloquently on their behalf.

Someone takes the risk of releasing the truth  
of who they are into the care of another  
and miracle of miracles, the other reaches out  
with both hands, cradles that truth, blesses it with acceptance,  
enfolds it in acknowledgement  
and tenderly gives it back into the care of the one  
who gave it life.

Now, that type of listening is rare.  
It's an art form, a sculptured moment of connection  
inviting us to come inside and be astonished  
at what the heart can hold

## Have a go at 2-pen dialoguing...

**Pen 1:** Write 'I notice I'm  
feeling... [tired / sore /  
overwhelmed / uncertain] right  
now'

**Pen 2:** Respond as if to a close  
friend - what would you want  
them to hear?

# Compassion Journalling

## – A Simple Guide

.....

**Purpose:** To notice your inner experiences and respond with kindness.

**Materials:** Two different coloured pens and paper.

### Feeling overwhelmed?

Try the 3-Step Version by completing just sections 1, 2, and 5  
(Ground, Notice, Self-Kindness)

*...Sometimes less is more nurturing.*

## 1. Ground

.....

- Hand on heart, breathe slowly
- Feel your compassionate voice - how would it speak to a friend?

## 2. Notice

.....

### (Using First Pen / Pencil)

- Write briefly: What felt hard today?
- Just a few words is fine

## 3. Respond with Compassion

.....

### (Using Second Pen / Pencil)

- Write to yourself like you're speaking to a dear friend
- Ask: *What do I need to hear right now?*

## 4. Remember You're Not Alone

.....

- Is this something other people go through too?
- What small act of care could you show yourself?

## 5. Kind Words

- Write 1-2 kind phrases, e.g.:
- "I see your struggle"
- "You're doing your best"
- "I'm here for you"

## 6. Close

- Notice your breath
- Choose one small caring action for today.

## Tips

- Begin with a lovingkindness meditation
- Use when you notice self-criticism
- Even one section helps
- Seeking support is also self-compassion

See if you can observe without judgement,  
simply noticing what comes up.

# Lovingkindness Meditation

*Complementary Practice with Compassion Journaling*



This guided meditation helps prepare the ground for compassion by cultivating warmth and connection. It begins with body-based awareness – tuning into physical sensations, breath, and the felt sense of care – to support embodied integration rather than staying solely in cognitive space.

The practice moves through offering lovingkindness to yourself, a loved one, a neutral person, someone you find difficult, and finally all beings everywhere.

Audio version (12 minutes):

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1hm4w3E6HUYWvl-OJHxSKdhEsjmLO16qY/view>

Written version available on request: [katepoll@gmail.com](mailto:katepoll@gmail.com)

[www.katepoll.co.uk](http://www.katepoll.co.uk)

# The Importance & Power of Compassion

**Compassion is a biological need** wired into us for connection, resilience, and wellbeing. Like a muscle, it strengthens with practice. Research shows that when we give or receive care – such as when a caregiver soothes an infant – both the caregiver and the cared-for experience a surge of oxytocin, the “bonding hormone”, fostering trust, safety, and connection.

We can activate oxytocin in ourselves when we practise self-compassion, nurturing ourselves with warmth and understanding instead of self-judgement.



## You Can Build Compassion Like A Muscle

Compassion Journalling and this Self-Compassion Tracker are complementary tools designed to help you cultivate self-compassion as a lifelong practice.

**Self-Kindness**, **Common Humanity**, and **Mindfulness** are three key qualities that nurture self-compassion. By tracking them over four weeks, you can build greater awareness and reinforce positive change.

**This isn't about getting it right the first time--it is a practice that nurtures a kinder, more understanding relationship with ourselves.**

### Key qualities of Self-Compassion

**Self-Kindness:** Treating yourself with warmth and understanding rather than harsh self-judgement—offering yourself the same care you would give to a close friend.

**Common Humanity:** Recognising that struggles, setbacks, and imperfections are a natural part of being human—you are not alone in your experiences.

**Mindfulness:** Noticing your thoughts and feelings with openness and curiosity, without getting swept away by them or judging yourself for having them.

**Nurturing:** Actively fostering growth and care for yourself and others

**Reframes:** A powerful habit changing exercise to help us change the way we treat ourselves and others. Your Self-Compassion Journal is a safe place to acknowledge and reflect on areas of self-judgement, isolating thoughts and over-identification. Your internal compassionate voice helps you reframe your negative thoughts and empowers you to transform self-criticism to a statement of need.

# Barriers to Self-Compassion

Sometimes we hold back from being kind to ourselves because of common misunderstandings:

## **"It's self-indulgent."**

In reality, self-compassion isn't about giving in to every craving – being truly kind to ourselves often means making choices that support our long-term wellbeing rather than short-term pleasure.

## **"It's a sign of weakness."**

Research shows self-compassion actually builds resilience and inner strength, helping us navigate challenges with greater stability and bounce back from setbacks.

## **"It will make me lazy or complacent."**

People who treat themselves with kindness are actually more motivated and better able to handle stress. Rather than being weighed down by harsh self-criticism, they can listen mindfully to feedback, take responsibility for their choices, and stay aligned with their core values.

## **"It's just self-pity."**

Self-compassion makes us less likely to ruminate and more likely to take a balanced perspective. It's about recognising that struggle and imperfection are part of being human – connecting us to others rather than isolating us in our pain.

## **"It's the same as self-esteem."**

Self-esteem depends on comparison – being "above average" or feeling special. Self-compassion is different: it's about being a friend to yourself no matter what, regardless of achievements, looks, or status. It allows us to see both strengths and flaws in ourselves and others without the need for competition.

**Understanding these misconceptions helps us embrace what self-compassion can offer us.**

# Writing Myself Back

Kate Poll

Plunged into full-on emergency mode, after weeks of sleep deprivation and emotional firefighting, the weight of my own grief and fears began to sink in. I longed for a mentor, a therapeutic guide, and a mother's holding – none of which were available.

It had been over three years since my mother's death and many more since she'd been able to nurture me in the way I now needed. Our family was facing a very different grief: the sudden death of a child, a close friend to one of our youngest, a death that blindsided us and felt all too close, shattering our sense of safety.

During that time, I happened across a paper on self-therapy and compassion that offered both a method and a renewed sense of purpose. Alongside continued reading on Compassion Focused Therapy, I began to explore what compassion and wisdom might be available within me – drawing on everything I had witnessed, read and absorbed. I reflected on which qualities of voice I could trust within every part of myself. These reflections became the foundation for an inner presence I would begin to turn to and build a relationship with through dialoguing with the page.

It helped me stay resilient during a time

**My inner wise voice meets the rawest parts of me, not with judgement or solution, but with a spaciousness that makes me feel nurtured and held.**

The shock ricocheted through us and our community. The once near-certainty that our children would reach adulthood and likely outlive us was gone. My partner and I did what we could to create a nest of safety for our children in a world that had just shifted on its axis. I questioned whether it was selfish, or even feasible, to continue my studies. The work had been centred on reflective inquiry into internal conflict; already challenging, without a crisis unfolding that would touch every part of our family.

when I needed to remain strong and emotionally resilient for my family. It became the practice I now call Compassion Journaling, and I have been adapting and sharing with others ever since.

The approach involves writing in two voices – one expressing whatever fear, anger, or shame was present, the other offering a steady, compassionate response. Often, the voice speaks little, simply affirming the underlying fear and effort behind a struggle. My inner wise

voice meets the rawest parts of me, not with judgement or solution, but with a spaciousness that makes me feel nurtured and held.

Its quiet power was building self-kindness within me: I felt seen, listened to and accepted from within, both radically new and a form of reclamation. Through regular dialogue journaling, I came to recognise the compassionate wisdom and steady support as parts of myself. I was building a self-regulating internal space grounded in clarity and emotional safety.

Through this written dialoguing, my writing began to change. I noticed how I spoke to myself: through language, through how I treated my body, through quiet, persistent habits of dismissal and neglect that passed for coping. And I met myself with kindness.

As my relationship with this wise version of myself developed, I felt a shift. My confidence was growing, and I was able to hold space for myself. Crucially, it helped me stay present through the difficult circumstances enveloping me.

This crisis forced me to confront not just immediate loss, but the accumulated griefs I'd been carrying. At the time, I was already exploring different forms of grief, including the many ways we lose connection with ourselves and others. I began to notice how those griefs lived in my body. And as I did, my writing was

changing from simply expressing to becoming a form of listening and holding space for myself.

I wanted to communicate more authentically – not just outwardly, but within myself. That desire led me into a deeper relationship with signals I'd long ignored: exhaustion, fear, resentment, and the cost of living disconnected from my body. These were the places I had felt silenced or compromised by others' reactivity, leaving me disconnected and unheard.

This disconnection had deeper roots. Years earlier, I'd been diagnosed with Functional Neurological Disorder (FND) – a condition that disrupts communication between brain and body, often emerging in the wake of trauma or prolonged stress. Forced to confront the cost of living from the neck up, since then my focus has been learning to manage my energy and build a sustainable life and practice.

Grief doesn't always show up as tears. Sometimes it arrives as bone-deep exhaustion. As a near-constant gnawing in the gut. As involuntary movements – a head or limb jerking or giving way. Anything from full-body fitting to, once, although still conscious, being able to move only my eyelids. As shame. My body breaking down in ways I couldn't predict or control, and the fear that my fracture lines were laid bare. I now understand FND as a response to

internal conflict, exhaustion, and undiagnosed neurodiversity I had worked relentlessly to hide. At the time, I had no real concept of anxiety within myself. It didn't fit with my external identity of calm competence – endless, unflappable multitasking. In fact, I kept raising the bar each time something began to feel too easy.

I'm learning just how many forms grief can take and how layered they can be. There's the grief of death, but also the grief of fragmentation, of not being seen or understood. Some of my earliest griefs weren't traditional losses. They were about feeling unrecognisable to the people I most wanted to connect with. That kind of grief leaves fragments of self, exiled inside.

In my own life, those griefs have included the slow, silent loss of my voice as I learnt to adjust, perform, and suppress parts of myself. There's the loss of misrecognition, mine and others', in the face of unacknowledged neurodivergence and trauma. And the gradual loss of my mother's voice through the aphasia that accompanied her rare form of dementia.

Even chosen loss leaves its mark: walking away from inherited loyalties to protect peace, knowing that what's unprocessed may return later in the ache of missed repair.

Despite my continued efforts, I still live

from the neck up too often, a survival strategy I haven't fully outgrown. In truth, it is often fear of the next reckoning rather than genuine self-care that first brings me back into line. But my body, when I let it, helps keep my goals sustainable, relationships healthy and work self-aligned. Sometimes gently, sometimes forcefully, it reminds me I'm not paying attention. Rather than fearing my body, I am slowly and inconsistently learning to welcome it as a trusted ally that always tells the truth, never too ashamed or afraid to see.

**I remember the moment I realised those inner dialogues (colour-coded in different pens to help me track whose voice I was channelling) had begun to internalise. The conversations were no longer on the page alone. My previously critical voices grew quieter the more room I gave them to vent. I began to trust that my compassionate voice was becoming an integrated part of me.**

For the first time, I felt I was caring for myself without shame. There was no fear of being self-indulgent, no urge to over-correct through rigorous self-interrogation. My compassionate voice held the best of my mother's nurturing approach and my own, combined with that calming, grounded presence I admire in Carl Rogers' work that is fully attentive and free from judgement.

In my personal practice, I think of this voice as my inner mother, though I encourage participants to reflect on what image would feel most aligned for them. For me, it evokes the qualities of unconditional care and wisdom I was seeking. For others, it might be a wise friend, an elder, or simply their own most grounded self.

Having piloted the process with small groups, I now offer community courses, creating extended and inclusive multi-sensory versions that incorporate other therapeutic arts, designed to resonate across different life experiences. And I have noticed something that seemed subtle at first, but proves essential learning for my own practice. My wise, compassionate voice, the one that can

feel so integrated and steady, starts to fade if I begin to let go of the structure of my journalling process in the belief it's now fully part of me. It isn't that the practice fails; it is that I stop actively developing my compassion-building muscle and fall back into old habits of stonewalling my body and defensive self-talk riddled with criticism and contempt.

This practice is teaching me that healing isn't something I can arrive at but an ongoing relationship with myself. Compassion Journalling continues to be my anchor; it helps me attune to and trust my internal wisdom. It reminds me that self-nurture doesn't lead to selfishness or complacency; it builds the resilience I need to show up with authenticity, boundaries, and compassion.

### CREATIVE PROMPT

Take a few minutes to reflect on how you typically speak to yourself when facing a challenge.

- Write down some phrases you might say to yourself – without judgement, just noticing.
- Now imagine a dear friend came to you with the same challenge. What tone would you use? What words? Write these down too.

Notice any differences. What might it feel like to offer yourself even a small portion of that same kindness?

# Theoretical Foundations

## Core References & Further Reading

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### Demonstration of Attentive Listening:

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