

Just Like My Friend



Talk about how easily we can be hard on ourselves—we're often self-critical without even realizing it. Researcher Kristen Neff suggests cultivating self-compassion, comprised of “kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness” (2018). Thinking about how we'd respond to a friend in our situation can help us reframe our experience and show kindness to ourselves. To emphasize common humanity, have students try this activity:

1. Think about a time when a friend or family member had a difficult experience.
2. As you think about that person, say these words to yourself:
“May my friend feel safe. May my friend feel happy. May my friend feel healthy. May my friend live with ease.”
3. Now think about a time when you had a difficult experience.
4. As you think about your own experience, say these words to yourself:
“Just like my friend, may I feel safe and protected. Just like my friend, may I feel happy and calm. Just like my friend, may I feel healthy and strong. Just like my friend, may I feel at ease with my life.”

Have students write down their reflections about this activity—how do they feel afterward? Do they notice a difference?