

The Kindness Handbook

Sharon Salzberg

Self-Compassion Scale



I found this research tool Dr. Neff developed both interesting and fun. You can, if you wish, do it periodically and get a sense of the self-kindness, sense of common humanity, and mindfulness you are bringing to bear in your life. If you feel dissatisfied with your score, try to consider this yet another opportunity to let go of self-condemnation and disdain and to practice self-compassion. (That is in part why I found it fun — you can't lose.)

RATE YOUR SELF-COMPASSION LEVEL

Please read each statement carefully before answering. To the left of each item, indicate how often you behave in the stated manner, using the following scale:

Almost never

Almost always

1 2 3 4 5

- _____ 1. I'm disapproving and judgmental about my own flaws and inadequacies.
- _____ 2. When I'm feeling down, I tend to obsess and fixate on everything that's wrong.
- _____ 3. When things are going badly for me, I see the difficulties as part of life that everyone goes through.
- _____ 4. When I think about my inadequacies, it tends to make me feel more separate and cut off from the rest of the world.
- _____ 5. I try to be loving toward myself when I'm feeling emotional pain.
- _____ 6. When I fail at something important to me, I become consumed by feelings of inadequacy.
- _____ 7. When I'm down and out, I remind myself that there are lots of other people in the world feeling like I am.
- _____ 8. When times are really difficult, I tend to be tough on myself.

- _____ 9. When something upsets me, I try to keep my emotions in balance.
- _____ 10. When I feel inadequate in some way, I try to remind myself that feelings of inadequacy are shared by most people.
- _____ 11. I'm intolerant and impatient toward those aspects of my personality I don't like.
- _____ 12. When I'm going through a very hard time, I give myself the caring and tenderness I need.
- _____ 13. When I'm feeling down, I tend to feel like most other people are probably happier than I am.
- _____ 14. When something painful happens, I try to take a balanced view of the situation.
- _____ 15. I try to see my failings as part of the human condition.
- _____ 16. When I see aspects of myself that I don't like, I get down on myself.
- _____ 17. When I fail at something important to me, I try to keep things in perspective.
- _____ 18. When I'm really struggling, I tend to feel like other people must be having an easier time of it.
- _____ 19. I'm kind to myself when I'm experiencing suffering.

- _____ 20. When something upsets me, I get carried away with my feelings.
- _____ 21. I can be a bit cold-hearted toward myself when I'm experiencing suffering.
- _____ 22. When I'm feeling down, I try to approach my feelings with curiosity and openness.
- _____ 23. I'm tolerant of my own flaws and inadequacies.
- _____ 24. When something painful happens, I tend to blow the incident out of proportion.
- _____ 25. When I fail at something that's important to me, I tend to feel alone in my failure.
- _____ 26. I try to be understanding and patient toward those aspects of my personality I don't like.

Scoring Sheet

SK: Self-Kindness Items

$$\#5 + \#12 + \#19 + \#23 + \#26 = \text{Subtotal}$$

$$\underline{\hspace{1cm}} + \underline{\hspace{1cm}} + \underline{\hspace{1cm}} + \underline{\hspace{1cm}} + \underline{\hspace{1cm}} = \underline{\hspace{1cm}}$$

Divide subtotal by 5 for SK Mean

SJ: Self-Judgment Items

$$\#1 + \#8 + \#11 + \#16 + \#21 = \text{Subtotal}$$

$$\underline{\hspace{1cm}} + \underline{\hspace{1cm}} + \underline{\hspace{1cm}} + \underline{\hspace{1cm}} + \underline{\hspace{1cm}} = \underline{\hspace{1cm}}$$

Divide subtotal by 5 for SJ Mean

CH: Common Humanity Items

$$\#3 + \#7 + \#10 + \#15 = \text{Subtotal}$$

$$\underline{\hspace{1cm}} + \underline{\hspace{1cm}} + \underline{\hspace{1cm}} + \underline{\hspace{1cm}} = \underline{\hspace{1cm}}$$

Divide subtotal by 4 for CH Mean

I: Isolation Items

$$\#4 + \#13 + \#18 + \#25 = \text{Subtotal}$$

$$\underline{\hspace{1cm}} + \underline{\hspace{1cm}} + \underline{\hspace{1cm}} + \underline{\hspace{1cm}} = \underline{\hspace{1cm}}$$

Divide subtotal by 4 for I Mean

M: Mindfulness Items

$$\#9 + \#14 + \#17 + \#22 = \text{Subtotal}$$

$$\underline{\hspace{1cm}} + \underline{\hspace{1cm}} + \underline{\hspace{1cm}} + \underline{\hspace{1cm}} = \underline{\hspace{1cm}}$$

Divide subtotal by 4 for M Mean

OI: Over-Identification Items

$$\#2 + \#6 + \#20 + \#24 = \text{Subtotal}$$

$$\underline{\hspace{1cm}} + \underline{\hspace{1cm}} + \underline{\hspace{1cm}} + \underline{\hspace{1cm}} = \underline{\hspace{1cm}}$$

Divide subtotal by 4 for OI Mean

Total Self-Compassion Score

1. Reverse code (rc) the negatively worded subscales (SJ, I, and OI) by subtracting each mean from 6:
 - 6 - SJ mean = SJ(rc)
 - 6 - I mean = I(rc)
 - 6 - OI mean = OI(rc)

2. Add the six means:

$$SK + SL(rc) + CH + I(rc) + M + OI(rc) = \text{Total Mean}$$

$$\underline{\quad} + \underline{\quad} + \underline{\quad} + \underline{\quad} + \underline{\quad} + \underline{\quad} = \underline{\quad}$$

3. Calculate Grand Self-Compassion Mean.

$$\text{Total Mean divided by } 6 = \underline{\quad}$$

Score Interpretations

Average scores tend to be around 3.0 on the 1–5 scale, so you can interpret your total self-compassion score accordingly. As a rough guide, a score of 1–2.5 indicates you are low in self-compassion, 2.5–3.5 indicates you are moderate, and 3.5–5.0 means you are high. Remember that higher means for the SJ, I, and OI subscales indicate *less* self-compassion before reverse coding and *more* after reverse coding.

Increasing Self-Compassion Through Reflection



While it might seem that personal suffering is all too obvious, many times we actually don't pause to acknowledge our own pain, or if we do so we react reflexively by lashing out or quietly being filled with resentment. We know that we can extend compassion toward ourselves when the circumstances of life are painful and difficult to bear. Our tendency, though, might be to feel that we've failed or to feel angry, humiliated, or hopeless. We might confuse self-compassion with self-pity, and therefore try to avoid it.

Self-compassion exercises involve "stepping out" of our ordinary experience of painful feeling, taking a meta-perspective on