

Write A Compassionate Letter To A Part Of Yourself

1. Write down a part of yourself that you don't like or don't want or tend to struggle with; a part of yourself that you tend to judge or criticise or see as a problem. This might be an emotion you struggle with - like anxiety or sadness or anger. Or it might be a part of your body. Or it might be your mind. Or it might be a particular theme your mind likes to dwell on, such as 'I'm not good enough'. Or it might be some painful memories.

2. Write down what difficult thoughts and feelings show up when you think about the above.

3. Now consider this question:

Have you ever tried to help someone out, but it backfired or went wrong and you ended up hurting them? Have you ever been judged or blamed or criticised by others when they couldn't see (or didn't approve of) how you were just trying to help out or do the right thing? What was that like for you?

4. Now the aim is to write a compassionate letter to this part of you that you don't like, don't want, and tend to judge harshly. (Why? To help you stop fighting it, drop the struggle with it.)

The first step is to remember that at some level, your body and your mind and your thoughts and your feelings, are always trying to help you: their aim is either to help you get something you want or avoid something you don't want. So in this letter, you want to acknowledge this.

The idea is to imagine this part of you is some kind of sentient being, with its own thoughts and feelings; and it's been trying very hard in its own unique way to help you; and it knows you don't like it, don't want it, judge it harshly; and it's feeling hurt because of all that.

So consider:

- How has this part of you been helpful in the past?
- What has it helped you to get or avoid?
- What does it alert you to that matters?
- What (or who) does it remind you is important?
- What (or who) does it remind you to take care of, pay attention to?

(Note: if you can't answer these questions, please stop the exercise and go back to your therapist, counsellor, or coach, and get clear on the answers.)

5. After considering this, write a letter to this part of you, as if writing to a loved one you have harshly and unfairly judged or criticised, wanting to repair things and make amends. Fill your words with kindness, appreciation and understanding as you write.

6. Tell this part of you:

- how they have been helpful, what benefits they have given you
- you understand the role they are playing in your life, and what they are trying to help you get or avoid
- what you have learned by taking the time to understand them, and how that will be useful in your life, going forwards.

7. Find a way to genuinely thank this part for its efforts in trying to help. Express your intention to stop fighting with it, or avoiding it, or criticising it. In your own words, tell it that your aim is to live with it in peace, and you want to find a way to let it help you constructively; to make good use of what it is offering.

8. Once you've finished, put the letter away for a while. It's often good to revisit it on future occasions when you fall back into a struggle with this part.