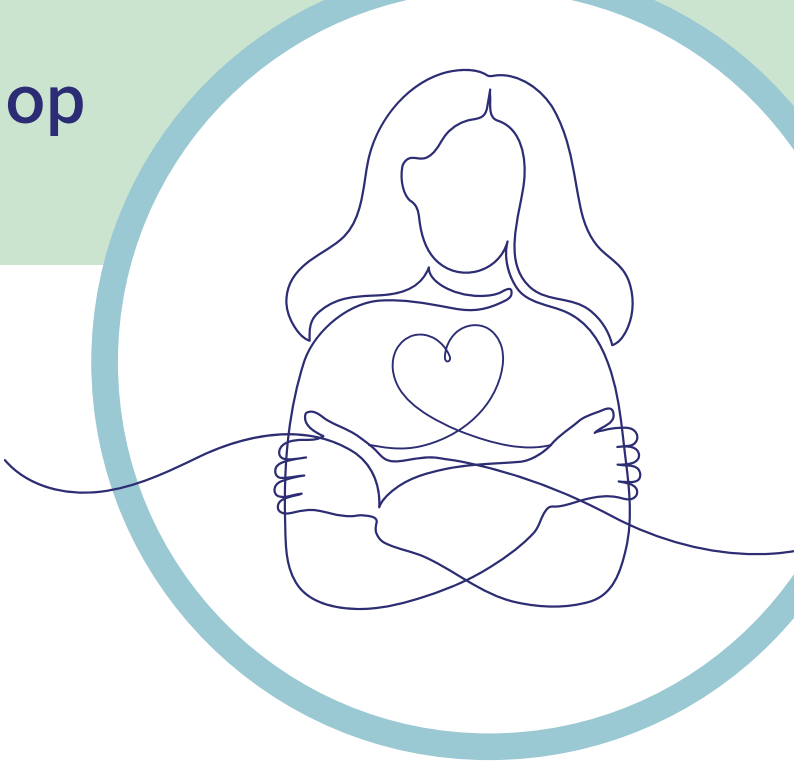
Helping your child develop self-compassion



What is self-compassion? Self-compassion means treating yourself with the same kindness, patience and understanding you would offer to someone you care about.

It doesn't mean ignoring mistakes or avoiding responsibility. It's about remembering that struggles are a normal part of life and learning to be understanding with yourself when things don't go as planned.

For a child, self-compassion might sound like:

- "I made a mistake, but I'm not a bad person."
- "This is hard, and I can give myself some time."
- "Everyone struggles sometimes. I can ask for help."

Why does it matter? Children and teens face academic pressure, friendship challenges, disappointment, conflict and big emotions. Self-compassion can help them:

- Build a healthier sense of self-worth
- Manage stress and difficult emotions
- Develop kinder, more balanced self-talk
- Bounce back from mistakes and setbacks
- Reduce harsh self-criticism
- Feel more comfortable asking for help

Children will face challenges and difficult moments. We can help them learn to navigate these experiences with kindness, understanding and compassion for themselves.

Help change the inner conversation

An inner conversation is the way we talk to ourselves in our minds. It includes the thoughts and words we use when we make mistakes, face challenges or experience difficult emotions. Practicing self-compassion means learning to make this inner conversation kinder, more supportive and understanding, just as we would speak to a friend who is having a hard time.

Instead of: "I'm so stupid. I can't do anything right!"

Try: *"I made a mistake. What can I learn from it?"*

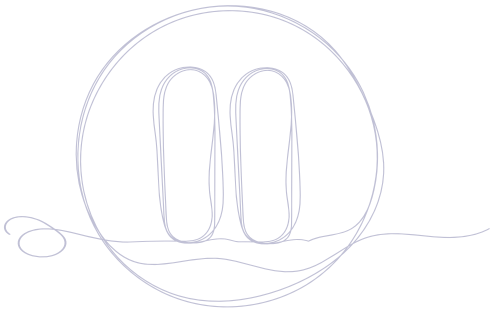
Instead of: "Everyone is better than me."

Try: *"I'm still learning. I don't have to be the best."*

Instead of: "Nobody likes me."

Try: *"I'm feeling left out right now. I can talk to someone I trust."*

The self-compassion pause



When your child is upset, frustrated, embarrassed or disappointed, try these **three simple steps** together:

1. **Notice.** *"This is hard right now."*
2. **Be kind.** *"I can be patient and kind to myself."*
3. **Move forward.** *"What do I need right now? What's one small step I can take?"*

What parents can do

Model it

Let your child hear you use compassionate self-talk:

"I made a mistake. I'm disappointed, but I'll give myself a chance to try again."

Ask this question

"Would you talk to your best friend the way you're talking to yourself?"

Focus on effort and growth

Instead of only celebrating the outcome, notice:

- ***"You kept trying."***
- ***"You asked for help."***
- ***"You tried something new."***
- ***"You learned from that mistake."***

Self-compassion reminder



Your child doesn't need to learn how to avoid struggle altogether.

They can learn something even more valuable:

"I'm having a hard time, but I don't have to be hard on myself."

Self-compassion is a skill. It grows through practice, modeling and repetition.

Small moments of kindness toward ourselves can make a big difference in how we care for our mental health.

Common Thread

by Wolfson Children's