

## Episode #175: Self Compassion



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With Your Host

**Natalie Bacon**

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## Episode #175: Self Compassion

Hi there. Welcome to the *Design Your Dream Life* podcast. My name is Natalie Bacon, and I'm an advanced certified mindfulness life coach as well as a wife and mom. If you're here to do the inner work and grow, I can help. Let's get started.

Hey there. Welcome to the podcast. Today I am so thrilled to be talking with you about self-compassion. Self-compassion is my new favorite topic. It is going to be a core part of my work going forward. It's kicking off with this podcast episode.

The doors to Grow You are open right now. I want to invite you to join us. In particular because next week on the 1<sup>st</sup> of the month, we are deep diving into self-compassion all month long. I think this is work that we all need, and I have an entire course curriculum in there. There is a class, a workbook. The workbook is going to help you take this work so much deeper in your life and really apply it. Then there will be calls as well that you can come and get help on with respect to self-compassion and really anything else that is going on in your life.

If you're not sure how self-compassion even is something that you would apply in your life, good news. Today I am going to be teaching you exactly how. I'm telling you, we all can benefit from having more self-compassion. It was just something that wasn't in my awareness until it was. Now, like I said, I'm a little bit obsessed with it.

So there are lots of different ways to think about self-compassion. Kristen Neff who has her PhD and is a scholar, an expert in the space of self-compassion. She's written books. I'm studying her work, and I've really enjoyed it. She talks about three components of self-compassion. There is the self-kindness component, the common humanity component, and the mindfulness component.

Today I want to talk with you about self-kindness. In the full course in Grow You, we'll go through all three. You'll get more than you've ever needed, but in a really simplified way because I'm always trying to simplify my teachings so that you can really apply them in your daily life.

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So let's take a step back and talk about where self-compassion comes up. Like why would you even need it? I think it is mostly because of how we treat ourselves on a daily basis without even realizing it. What's happening here is the stress response, the fight, flight, or freeze response that we're all familiar with turned inward onto ourselves.

So that fight part where if you think of your stress response being activated, the fight part means that you want to be confrontational or combative with someone else. Now when we turn that stress response inward onto ourselves, when we fight with ourselves, we are being self-critical. You end up beating yourself up and being really mean and harsh towards yourself. Now some of us know when we're doing this, and others of us, and I think more commonly, we don't even realize we're doing it. I think that's where this work is going to be so powerful.

So I just took a few thoughts that I've gathered from clients that exemplify exactly what I'm talking about. So the thought, "I'm miserably failing at being a mom. I hate who I'm being with my kids. I must be doing this all wrong because it's so impossible. I should know better. I can't believe I yelled like that. I can't believe I acted that way. My family deserves so much better. I'm really just not cut out for this. Really I am just so stupid. I can't believe I did that. What's the matter with me?"

So I rattled off this list with a tone, hopefully, that you could see was harsh. If I felt it in my chest, I would describe it as like tight and really firm. This is why I think that being self-critical and beating ourselves up can go undetected. Because it's not like all day long we are thinking bad things about ourselves expressly, but I think we do it subtly.

I think we think it's justified. We think it's useful. We think well I made that mistake or I yelled at the kids, of course I'm going to think that was really stupid or my family deserves better or I can't believe I acted that way. Like of course. What's the alternative? We're not taught this growing up.

When you do this, when you're self-critical and you put yourself down, you're like being the mean girl to yourself. It's literally saying mean things to

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you. You chip away at your self-love, your self-respect, your self-confidence, and your relationship with yourself. What's happening here is that there is so much negative judgement towards yourself that you think is justified.

What I want to convince you of is that it's never justified no matter what you have done. It's never justified, and it's also never useful. That's the thing. I think we think it's useful. We think we can beat ourselves up into change and into behaving differently. It's never that way. Never that way. It's always the opposite. It's always from love and from kindness. Because we have to understand that we are human beings. We were designed to make mistakes and to mess things up and to do it wrong. If we can allow space for that, life gets so, so, so much better.

It doesn't mean that you continue to do the things that you don't like about yourself that you're doing. So if you're yelling at your kids, it doesn't mean that you continue to do that. But it means that you give yourself a break and that you don't expect perfection. That you say yeah this is hard for me and this was a hard day for me. I'm doing my best and I'm working on this yelling thing. You say that from this place of love towards yourself instead of from this place of almost like discuss with yourself, embarrassment with yourself.

I like to give the example of looking in the mirror at your naked body. Like what are you thoughts? What's the conversation like with yourself? Do you engage in what I call low grade body bashing? I did a podcast episode on that. You can check that out as well.

It's the little comments like I wish this was a little tighter. I wish I had fewer wrinkles. Maybe I wish I was a little smaller. I don't like my rolls. It's being self-critical. It's disapproving of oneself. There's no upside to it. You can change from a place of love and acceptance, and I think that's the best way to change. Or you don't have to change.

Now maybe you can't get to the place where you just look in the mirror and absolutely love what you see. But what I suggest and what I do, I did this

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so much during my pregnancy. I would look in the mirror and I would be so fascinated with my body, and I would go to curiosity. I would say things to myself like, "Wow, my body is so interesting. Look at it. That is just fascinating."

So instead of being harsh and critical with gaining weight and with looking different, my body challenge area is always my legs. So even though my tummy was growing, of course, with the baby boy, my legs are my problem area. It's where I store a lot of fat. So when I saw my legs getting bigger during pregnancy, it took so much redirection. I did it very well I think. I really didn't let my brain go to the place of that low grade body bashing. Instead I stayed in curiosity and kindness.

That is what self-compassion is about. It's seeing that there is no perfect. There is no way that we do this thing called life without imperfections, without mistakes even. Can we allow space for that and love ourselves through it without the negative judgement?

Self-compassion has a warmth to it. There's this gentleness. There's this softness. I think there's a big difference between self-compassion and self-pity. You'll know the difference based on how it feels. So self-pity says poor me. I can't believe this is happening. Why is this happening to me? There are things I can't control that are bad and my life is so hard. It feels pretty bad. So if you check yourself, if you go into your body and you see how you're feeling and it feels down and bad, then you are likely in self-pity.

Self-compassion will not feel that way. It will feel like warmth and kindness and some fierceness or some empowerment. It will feel good. Self-compassion sees you as a human being who's supposed to make mistakes. When you do make mistakes, you don't punish yourself. Even the worst mistake.

Kristen Neff talks about how she was married and had an affair. How she really had just tortured herself over this and had no self-compassion for herself until she became a scholar in this area. So I love using this example

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because it's a mistake that we all think that well, this is something we want to not be happy about. We want to criticize ourselves for.

I think that there is so much more space for something in the middle where yeah, are we happy we did the mistake or made the mistake? It can be a small mistake. maybe you let out someone's secret or you forgot to do something that you were supposed to do or whatever it is. Whatever mistake that you've made. It's yes, I made a mistake and I still love me. I'm a human being. Of course I made a mistake.

Now where do I want to go from here? Do I want to apologize to someone? Is there anything that I can do to make this better? We're taking action from the place of I got me. Because you always only have you, right? You're not trading yourself in. You can't get another body and another brain. You only have you. So giving yourself permission to be kind of yourself and give yourself grace and not expect perfection. It's the way forward. It will really change your life in the most small ways and in the biggest ways.

I think that for me, the feeling of feeling really kind and gentle to myself was something that I just never had experienced until I started doing this work pretty much in the last year. You may be able to tell in how I've showed up differently and how my energy is so different. It's because I'm coming from this place of contentment and love and self-compassion. Right? I have this friendliness towards myself.

Now of course I am not perfect at it. Being someone who previously identified as type A and high achiever and I was a lawyer. I think my brain even more than some others who might naturally be kind to themselves was so geared towards being self-critical. You may be able to relate to this.

I just want to offer to you that that's not the only way to be. You can give yourself permission to be a human and love your humanness. Love that you are perfectly imperfect. Self-compassion doesn't mean that you give yourself a pass. It doesn't mean that you are not sorry. It doesn't mean that you continue to do things that you don't want to do, like the example of yelling at your kids.

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It does mean that you recognize that there's no place where you are perfect. So to some extent, self-compassion has this built in acceptance that you're not going to get it right 100% of the time ever and that that's okay. You'll still make mistakes. They'll just be different mistakes. You'll still have challenges. They'll just be different challenges. Self-compassion is an approach that you can take to be kinder with yourself instead of beating yourself up.

So one of my clients, a Grow You member, was explaining that she has no help during the day. She has four kids who she described as desperately needing her attention, but she felt like she can't give them all her attention all at once because she's trying to keep them all alive and dressed and fed and cleaned. It felt like there was just not enough to go around. She stated that she's just really miserably failing at being a mom. Her brain came up with that conclusion based on her brain's assessment of how she was performing.

That is being the mean girl to herself. That is being self-critical. If it's too challenging for you to jump to I'm the most amazing mom. I love talking about the world's okayest mom. It's sometimes I get it right and sometimes I get it wrong, and I love me. I love all of me. I love that I care so much about my kids, and I still love me even when I'm making mistakes as a mom.

Self-compassion requires a vulnerability where you are connected to yourself. You're open and you are honest and you look for solutions. You decide on purpose how do I want to show up? What do I want to think and feel here?

Moving from that harsh self-critical, self-judgement place to self-compassion takes practice, but you absolutely can do it. I think between that negative harsh place and total self-acceptance, you can use curiosity. You can use that emotion of wonder towards yourself. I wonder what else might be true here.



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In the example that I just gave, might it be true that I'm actually doing my best, and it's actually kind of hard for me to take care of myself right now let alone all the kids. What do I need? Because how we treat ourselves and how we take care of ourselves directly impacts how we can show up as the mom that we want to be. It doesn't mean that we're going to have a three hour self-care routine, but it means hey, let me give myself five minutes to give myself a hug.

That can kind of sound weird if you've never done this before, but don't let that weirdness and that awkwardness stop you from doing this work. Because I think we're just all so trained in being self-critical and harsh at our own detriment. Meaning we have made it a habit to be mean to ourselves and expect perfection when that's never going to be possible, nor should it be. So when we can move into acceptance and kindness and curiosity and love and gentleness, your whole world opens up. Because you let go of that unobtainable expectation.

Here's another example from a Grow You member who said, "I'm so easily triggered by my son even when he does typical kid things like asking a million questions or wanting my attention 24/7." She said, "I must be doing this all wrong."

So if you take that example and instead of going to the negative judgement, the self-critical conclusion that I must be doing this all wrong. What if we went to curiosity and we gave ourselves grace for the moments when we react not as our best. Instead we look and see, "Okay, what was I thinking and feeling there right before I was set off? Can I love myself even though I yelled?"

Ironically when you find it within your heart to love yourself even when you're making mistakes and doing it all wrong, that is actually when change becomes easier. Because you're not trying to beat yourself up into change. It's kind of like wanting to lose weight.

What I teach is if you are trying to lose weight from a place of hating yourself and beating yourself up, you end up self-sabotaging. So you end



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up slowing down, stopping, or quitting because the journey feels so terrible. So I think that's what we're doing as women, as wives, and as moms. We are beating ourselves up for how we are doing, for how we are showing up in our lives. We're wanting to change from this place of feeling horrible about ourselves. From this place of being the mean girl towards ourselves.

Instead what I want you to do is let go of that negative judgement, that self-talk that is so self-critical and approach yourself with friendliness, with kindness, with warmth. It's I did okay there. I'm working on it. I still love me. It wasn't my best moment, but at the time that wasn't my best. Do you see what I mean there? It's sometimes our best isn't very good, and that's okay. This is kind of hard, but I was made for this. There's nothing wrong with me. There's nothing wrong with my life. There's nothing wrong with my family. I made a mistake, and that's okay.

Self-compassion looks inward and is friendly to yourself. So it's asking yourself what is it that you need in this moment? It's looking for the answer in your gut, in your heart, in your body. It's finding a way to give that to yourself. Self-compassion is not about becoming better. It's not about changing who you are. It's about befriending who you already are. I really think that learning to be kind to myself has been the work of my lifetime. It has been so freeing, so incredible, so life giving.

This is available to you. There is nothing special about me applying this work. It's that I've been able to feel a shift because of how I treat myself. Because I have learned and am learning and am still applying this work to my everyday life. You, my friend, can absolutely do that too. Come on in to Grow You. Let's get started.

If you loved this podcast, I invite you to check out Grow You, my mindfulness community for moms where we do the inner work together. Head on over to [nataliebacon.com/coaching](https://nataliebacon.com/coaching) to learn more.