

A SELF-COMPASSION AND SELF-TRUST WORKBOOK

The Self-Love Practice Workbook

A Guided Workbook for Self-Compassion, Self-Trust, Boundaries, and Everyday Care

Self-love is not a personality trait, a mood, or a reward you earn after getting everything right. It is a relationship you practice with yourself. It grows when you notice your needs, speak to yourself with respect, choose care in small ways, and return to your own side after a hard moment.

This workbook is not about forcing positive thoughts or pretending life is easy. It is a place to build practical self-respect, self-compassion, and self-trust one choice at a time. Use it in order or begin with the page that feels most useful today.

Self-love can be quiet. It can sound like resting, asking for help, saying no, keeping a small promise, taking a breath, or speaking to yourself without cruelty.

START SMALL

How to Use This Workbook

There is no right pace. Keep the practices honest, doable, and specific to your real life.

Choose what is manageable

One written sentence or a two-minute practice counts. Consistency is more helpful than trying to do every exercise at once.

Use believable words

Change any phrase that feels too far away. "I am learning to be on my own side" may feel more accessible than "I love myself."

Notice without judging

The goal is information, not a score. Your reactions, needs, and resistance are all useful things to understand.

Return when you miss a day

A missed practice is not proof that you failed. It is another moment to practice beginning again without punishment.

My Intention for This Workbook

One part of my relationship with myself I want to strengthen is:

A small sign that I am being more loving toward myself is:

One person, place, or resource that helps me feel supported is:

CLEAR THE GROUND

What Self-Love Is and Is Not

Self-love is not always comfortable. It often asks you to tell the truth, care for your needs, and choose what aligns with your values.

Self-love can look like	Self-love is not
Giving yourself compassion when you are struggling and accountability when repair is needed.	Ignoring harm, avoiding responsibility, or expecting other people to meet every need.
Honoring your limits, energy, values, and wellbeing.	Always choosing what is easiest, most comfortable, or most immediately soothing.
Letting your needs matter alongside other people's needs.	Making yourself smaller to avoid conflict or making yourself the center of every situation.
Treating yourself with the dignity you would offer someone you care about.	Pretending you are perfect, never having doubt, or liking every part of yourself every day.

REFLECTION

Your Definition of a Loving Relationship with Yourself

Your version can be practical, imperfect, and personal.

How do I know I feel respected? Think about your body, your choices, your home, your calendar, your relationships, and the way you talk to yourself.	What helps me feel like myself? Notice activities, people, routines, values, and environments that bring you closer to your own voice.
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My Definition

A loving relationship with myself means:

I feel less connected to myself when:

One quality I want to bring into my relationship with myself is:

One thing I am ready to stop requiring of myself is:

YOUR INNER COMPASS

Know Yourself with Curiosity

Self-love is easier to practice when you can notice what is true for you before you rush to meet outside expectations.

Many people become skilled at reading a room, anticipating needs, and doing what seems expected. Those skills can be useful, but they can make it harder to hear your own preferences. Curiosity is a gentle way to return to yourself without demanding an immediate answer.

Values What matters deeply to you? Consider honesty, creativity, family, stability, justice, spirituality, learning, humor, freedom, connection, or peace.	Needs What helps you function and feel well? Consider rest, food, privacy, reassurance, movement, play, clarity, support, quiet, challenge, or time alone.
Preferences What do you genuinely like and dislike? Small preferences count. They give you practice noticing your own voice.	Body signals How does your body say yes, no, tired, overwhelmed, hungry, safe, interested, or ready for a break?

1 Pause

Take one slow breath and ask: "What am I noticing right now?"

2 Name one fact

Try a neutral observation: "My shoulders are tight." "I am rushing." "I want quiet." "I am looking forward to this."

3 Ask one kind question

Try: "What would help by five percent?" "What do I need more or less of?" or "What matters here?"

4 Choose one small response

Drink water, delay an answer, move your body, make a plan, ask for clarity, or simply write down what you noticed.

My Inner Compass Snapshot

A value I want to live more visibly is:

A need I have been overlooking is:

A preference I want to honor this week is:

One body signal I want to respond to with more care is:

FROM ATTACK TO SUPPORT

Change the Way You Speak to Yourself

A compassionate inner voice does not let you off the hook. It helps you stay present long enough to learn, repair, and keep going.

When the inner critic says	Try answering with
"I should be better by now."	"Growth is not a race. I can notice what is hard and take one useful next step."
"I always mess things up."	"This is one situation. I can own what happened without turning it into a definition of me."
"I am too much."	"My feelings and needs are real. I can express them with care and still belong."
"I do not deserve a break."	"Rest supports me. I do not have to earn basic care by exhausting myself."

PRACTICE

The Three-Part Self-Compassion Reset

Use this after a mistake, a conflict, a disappointment, or a difficult emotion.

1 Name the moment

Say: "This is hard," "I feel embarrassed," or "I am disappointed." Naming is not exaggerating. It is making room for what is real.

2 Remember your humanity

Say: "Other people struggle with this too." "I am not the only person who gets overwhelmed, makes mistakes, or needs support."

3 Offer a next kind step

Ask: "What would I say to someone I love here?" Then choose one doable action, such as a pause, a repair, food, rest, a walk, or a supportive message.

A Kinder Response

The situation that brought up self-criticism was:

The harsh message I heard was:

A compassionate and honest response I can practice is:

My next kind step is:

BECOME SOMEONE YOU CAN RELY ON

Build Self-Trust through Small Promises

Self-trust is not certainty. It is the growing belief that you will listen to yourself, make a choice, and return with care when life gets messy.

Big declarations can feel inspiring, but small follow-through creates the strongest evidence. The promise can be modest: eat lunch, leave ten minutes early, check your bank account, take your medication, reply tomorrow, go to bed, or ask one question before agreeing. The size matters less than the honesty and repetition.

Make it specific

Choose a clear action, not a vague hope. "I will take a five-minute walk after lunch" is easier to keep than "I will take better care of myself."

Make it realistic

Set the promise at the level of your actual energy and capacity, not the level you think you should have.

Make room for repair

If you miss the promise, ask what got in the way. Adjust the plan rather than using the miss as proof that you cannot trust yourself.

Record the evidence

Write down the small moments you listened to yourself. Your brain may need help noticing your follow-through.

My Small-Promise Plan

A signal or need I want to listen to is:

The small promise I want to make is:

The cue, time, or reminder that will help is:

If I miss the practice, I will repair with myself by:

The evidence I will look for is:

Self-trust grows every time you notice a need and respond with even a little more care than you did before.

SELF-RESPECT IN ACTION

Protect Your Energy with Boundaries

A boundary is a way of staying connected to yourself while you are in connection with someone else.

Boundaries are not punishments, and they do not require another person to agree with you. They are clear statements about what you have capacity for, what you need, and what you will do to care for yourself. Boundaries can be kind, direct, brief, and imperfect.

Before saying yes Pause and ask: "Do I want to?" "Do I have capacity?" "What will this cost me?" and "What information do I still need?"	Use a simple sentence Try: "I cannot do that today." "I need to think about it." "I am not available for that conversation right now."
Expect feelings Guilt, worry, or discomfort can appear when you do something new. Feeling uncomfortable does not automatically mean you did something wrong.	Follow through gently If a limit is not respected, repeat it once, step away, delay your response, end the interaction, or ask for support.

Instead of	Try
Over-explaining why you cannot.	"I am not able to do that."
Answering immediately to avoid discomfort.	"Let me get back to you."
Apologizing for every need.	"Thank you for understanding."
Turning a limit into a debate.	"I hear that you are disappointed. My answer is still no."

My Boundary Practice

A situation where I need more choice, space, or clarity is:

The boundary sentence I want to practice is:

The feeling I expect afterward is:

One way I will support myself is:

EVERYDAY CARE IS NOT EXTRA

Care for Your Body, Time, and Space

Self-love becomes more believable when it has a place in your daily life, not only in your thoughts.

Body care Consider sleep, food, water, medication, movement, hygiene, medical care, comfort, and rest. Ask: "What is one basic support my body needs today?"	Time care Protect margin in your day. Consider transition time, a realistic to-do list, breaks, a calmer morning, and saying no to one unnecessary demand.
Space care Choose one small action that makes your environment easier to live in: clear a surface, prepare clothes, lower noise, light a candle, or make a resting corner.	Joy care Make room for pleasure, interest, play, creativity, beauty, nature, music, laughter, or meaningful connection. Joy is a valid need, not a reward.

PRACTICE

The Five-Minute Care Menu

Pick one action that is small enough to happen on a regular day.

1 Settle Drink water, take five slower breaths, stretch, or step outside.
2 Support Eat a snack, take medication, make an appointment, or text someone safe.
3 Simplify Cross off one nonessential task, make a short list, or prepare one thing for tomorrow.
4 Enjoy Listen to a song, look at the sky, make tea, read one page, or do something creative for five minutes.

My Personal Care Menu

When I have very little energy, a caring action I can do is:

When I have a little more energy, I can:

One thing that helps my space feel supportive is:

One simple source of joy I want to make time for is:

CONNECTION WITHOUT ABANDONING YOURSELF

Let Relationships Support Your Self-Love

A loving relationship with yourself can help you choose connections where you are treated with respect, warmth, and honesty.

Self-love does not mean doing everything alone. It means allowing support that aligns with your wellbeing and learning to stay connected to your own voice in relationships. You can care deeply about people without ignoring your limits, needs, or values.

Signs of supportive connection	Signs to pause and reflect
You can be honest without being mocked, shamed, or punished.	You regularly feel smaller, confused, pressured, or afraid to have needs.
Your no is respected, even when someone is disappointed.	Your limits are argued with, ignored, or treated as a problem to solve.
Care flows in more than one direction over time.	You feel responsible for managing another person's mood, comfort, or choices.
You can ask for clarification, space, or repair.	You have to minimize yourself to keep the connection stable.

Ask for support clearly

Try: "Could you listen for five minutes?" "Can you help me think this through?" or "I do not need advice right now. I need encouragement."

Receive care at your pace

You can accept a kind gesture without owing more access, agreement, or availability. A simple "thank you" can be enough.

My Support Circle

A person or community where I feel more like myself is:

One kind of support I would feel comfortable asking for is:

A relationship pattern I want to notice with more honesty is:

One choice that would help me stay connected to myself is:

A WRITABLE PRACTICE

Self-Compassion: Practice Being on Your Own Side

Self-compassion is not self-indulgence or an excuse. It is the choice to meet a hard moment with honesty, warmth, and a willingness to support yourself.

Self-compassion can feel unfamiliar, especially if you learned that being hard on yourself keeps you motivated or safe. The goal is not to argue yourself into feeling wonderful. It is to reduce unnecessary cruelty so you have enough steadiness to learn, repair, rest, or try again.

Notice without shaming Name what is present: hurt, fear, disappointment, anger, exhaustion, or embarrassment. A feeling is information, not a character flaw.	Speak as a caring witness Imagine you are sitting beside yourself. What would you say that is honest, protective, and not punishing?
Let the need matter Ask what would help right now: a pause, food, water, space, reassurance, a plan, a boundary, or support from someone safe.	Choose one next step Self-compassion becomes real through action. Pick the smallest step that would make this moment five percent easier.

PRACTICE

The C.A.R.E. Exercise

Use this when your inner critic is loud or when you are struggling with a mistake, a conflict, or a hard feeling.

1 Catch what is hard

Complete the sentence: "This is hard because..." Keep it specific and kind.

2 Acknowledge your humanity

Say: "I am not alone in having a hard day." "People make mistakes, need support, and get overwhelmed."

3 Respond with warmth

Try a believable phrase: "I can be gentle with myself while I figure this out." "I deserve care even when I am struggling."

4 Encourage one next step

Ask: "What is one thing I can do that would support me right now?" Then do only that one thing.

A Self-Compassion Letter to Myself

The difficult thing I am carrying right now is:

What I most need to hear about this is:

If someone I love were in this situation, I would tell them:

A few words I choose to offer myself now are:

GENTLE ACCOUNTABILITY

Self-Work: Understand the Pattern, Choose the Next Step

Self-work is not a project of fixing yourself. It is a way to understand what you do when you are stressed and to practice a more supportive option.

A pattern can be understandable and still be worth changing. Instead of asking “What is wrong with me?” try asking “What happens inside me, what is it trying to protect, and what would help me respond differently next time?”

When the old pattern shows up	Practice a more supportive option
I push through until I am depleted.	Pause earlier, name the cost, and choose one basic support before the next demand.
I say yes when I mean no.	Give yourself time: “Let me think about it.” Check capacity before deciding.
I criticize myself after a mistake.	Separate the fact from the attack. Own what needs repair without turning it into a verdict about you.
I avoid what feels difficult.	Choose the smallest safe step: gather information, set a timer, ask for help, or begin for two minutes.

The Pattern and My New Choice

A situation that tends to bring out an old pattern is:

What I usually think, feel, or do is:

What this pattern may be trying to protect me from is:

A more supportive choice I want to practice is:

The smallest first step I can take is:

Growth is not about becoming flawless. It is about noticing sooner, choosing with more care, and repairing without abandoning yourself.

PRACTICE BOTH

Love and Respect as Daily Actions

Love is the warmth you offer yourself. Respect is the way you honor your dignity, limits, voice, and wellbeing in real life.

Love can sound like "I am listening." "I am allowed to have feelings." "I can comfort myself without minimizing what hurts."	Respect can sound like "My time and energy matter." "I can ask for clarity." "I do not have to accept what violates my values."
Love can look like Comfort, forgiveness, rest, curiosity, play, receiving care, and noticing the good in yourself without needing to be perfect.	Respect can look like Boundaries, honest choices, medical care, financial care, leaving hurtful dynamics, keeping promises, and speaking up for what matters.

WRITING PRACTICE

Two Questions for Today

Choose one answer, write a sentence, or make a small plan.

What Would Love Do?

If I treated myself with love in this situation, I would:

One comforting or encouraging thing I can offer myself is:

One quality I appreciate or want to appreciate about myself is:

What Would Respect Do?

If I treated myself with respect in this situation, I would:

A limit, request, or choice that would honor me is:

One commitment I want to keep with myself is:

A GROUNDED GRATITUDE PRACTICE

Gratitude That Holds the Whole Truth

Gratitude is not a command to be happy or a reason to ignore pain. It is a way of noticing what supports you while making room for what is hard.

Healthy gratitude has room for complexity. You can be grateful for a kind person and still be lonely. You can appreciate your body and still be frustrated with it. You can notice something good today without pretending that a difficult situation is okay. Gratitude works best when it feels honest.

Notice the ordinary

Warm water, a comfortable chair, reliable transportation, a familiar routine, a song, a pet, a meal, or a moment of quiet can all count.

Thank yourself too

Notice an effort, a choice, a skill, a boundary, or a moment of courage. You are allowed to appreciate your own contribution.

Name what is still hard

Being grateful does not erase grief, anger, stress, or uncertainty. You can include both in the same sentence.

Let gratitude lead to care

Ask: "What is this good thing showing me that I value?" Then choose one small way to protect or create more of it.

My Grounded Gratitude Page

Today, I am grateful for:

Something ordinary that supported me is:

One strength, effort, or choice I want to thank myself for is:

Something difficult I am carrying is:

A caring response I can offer myself alongside that difficulty is:

One thing I want to notice or appreciate again tomorrow is:

I can notice what is good without denying what is hard. Both can be true, and both deserve my honesty.

TWO WEEKS OF SMALL CARE

A 14-Day Self-Love Practice

Repeat, rearrange, or skip days as needed. The practice is returning, not performing.

Day 1: Notice a need Name one need without judging it.	Day 2: Keep one small promise Choose one doable act of care and follow through.
Day 3: Soften self-talk Catch one critical phrase and answer with a more honest, kinder one.	Day 4: Protect five minutes Create a short pocket of time for rest, quiet, movement, or joy.
Day 5: Honor a preference Choose something because you like it, even if it is small.	Day 6: Practice a boundary Pause before saying yes, or use one brief limit.
Day 7: Receive support Accept a kind word, a practical favor, or a moment of care.	Day 8: Check your body Respond to hunger, thirst, fatigue, tension, or the need for movement.
Day 9: Choose less Remove, delay, or simplify one demand that is not essential.	Day 10: Make space for joy Do one small thing that feels interesting, comforting, or beautiful.
Day 11: Tell the truth Write one honest sentence about what you feel or need.	Day 12: Repair gently If you missed something, ask what support would help next time.
Day 13: Name evidence Write down one way you showed up for yourself this week.	Day 14: Choose what continues Keep one practice that felt possible and supportive.

My Reflection after 14 Days

The practice that felt most natural or helpful was:

The practice that was hardest was:

Something I learned about my needs, values, or limits is:

One practice I want to keep for the next two weeks is:

Choose Your Next Loving Step

The strongest self-love plan is not the most ambitious one. It is the one you can come back to when you are tired, busy, uncertain, or having a hard day.

My Ongoing Self-Love Plan

The area I most want to nurture is:

My smallest weekly practice will be:

The cue or reminder that will help me remember is:

When I notice self-criticism, my compassionate response will be:

The boundary or supportive choice I want to protect is:

The person or professional support I can include is:

A sentence I want to remember is:

KEEP GOING WITH SUPPORT

Support Is Part of Self-Love

You deserve care that helps you feel more steady, more connected to yourself, and more able to choose the life you want.

Consider therapy support when

Self-criticism, shame, anxiety, relationship patterns, trauma, burnout, or low mood make it difficult to meet your needs or feel worthy of care.

Bring this workbook to therapy

Circle what fits, fill out one page, and share what feels supportive or difficult. Your responses can guide the work you do together.

You do not have to feel confident every day to practice self-love. You only need to keep returning to yourself with a little more honesty, care, and respect.

A Note From Dr. Natalie Ellis

Self-love is not a finish line. It is a daily relationship with yourself, built through the ordinary moments when you decide that your needs, voice, and wellbeing are worth listening to.

Ready to strengthen your relationship with yourself?

Schedule a free consultation with Dr. Natalie Ellis, LCSW-QS

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