



## Gratitude, Savoring & Self-Appreciation: Self-Compassion Exercises

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Gratitude, savoring and self-appreciation are daily practices that people can engage in to increase mindful self-compassion.

- Gratitude is the act of being thankful. It has the power to unshackle us from negative emotions and is said to have a multitude of benefits to our mental health.
- Savoring is the act of slowing down long enough to enjoy, find joy in a moment. Savoring our food, our time in nature, our time with loved ones can also add to our experience in the moment while also building our capacity to deal with life's stressors.
- Self-appreciation is the act of stepping into appreciation and love of self. In a world where messages drive us away from this very powerful place of self-love, self-appreciation is a radical and necessary practice we must engage in every day to foster compassion within and among ourselves.

The following exercises are two which you can use in your mindful self-compassion practice to cultivate savoring, self-appreciation and gratitude.

### Exercise One: Affectionate Breathing

- Please find a posture in which your body is comfortable and will feel supported for the length of the meditation. Then let your eyes gently close, partially or fully. Taking a few slow, easy breaths, releasing any unnecessary tension in your body.
- If you like, placing a hand over your heart or another soothing place as a reminder that we're bringing not only awareness, but affectionate awareness, to our breathing and to ourselves. You can leave your hand there or let it rest anytime.
- Now beginning to notice your breathing in your body, feeling your body breathe in and feeling your body breathe out.
- Perhaps noticing how your body is nourished on the in-breath and relaxes with the out-breath.
- Just letting your body breathe you. There is nothing you need to do.
- Now noticing the rhythm of your breathing, flowing in and flowing out. (pause) Taking some time to feel the rhythm of your breathing.
- Perhaps inclining your attention toward your breathing as you might toward a beloved child or a dear friend.
- Feeling your whole body subtly moving with the breath, like the movement of the sea.
- Your mind will naturally wander like a curious child or a little puppy. When that happens, just gently returning to the rhythm of your breathing.
- If you notice there's a sense of watching your breath, see if you can let that go and just be with your breath, feeling it.
- Allowing your whole body to be gently rocked and caressed – internally caressed - by your breathing.
- If you like, even giving yourself over to your breathing.
- Just breathing. Being breathing.
- And now, gently releasing your attention to your breathing, sitting quietly in your own experience, and allowing yourself to feel whatever you're feeling and to be just as you are.
- When you are ready, slowly and gently opening your eyes.



## Exercise Two: Self-Compassion Sunbath

- First, sit in a comfortable position, and take a few breaths to simply allow yourself to settle and relax. With each exhale, let go of a little of the stress and tension in your body—letting go a little more with each exhale.
- Next, imagine you're on a beautiful exotic beach. In front of you is the ocean—a deep green-blue color, against the cloudless light blue sky. You lay down on the sand, and feel the warmth of the sun on your skin. You can feel your skin soaking up the warmth of the sun, almost like a sponge. The warmth is perfect—not too hot, just enough so that it feels just right against your skin. In fact, it's just what you need right now.
- As you lie here, you notice that there seems to be a feeling coming with the warmth—a feeling that envelops you, holds you, supports you. It's a feeling of overwhelming calmness, a knowingness, a sense of peace. And you hear—or feel, or simply know—some words: “Everything is going to be okay.” Somehow, deep in your bones, you know this to be true. You know that whatever happens, however things work out, all will be okay.
- You lie on the sand, feeling the warmth of the sun permeating your body, offering you a deep sense of peace, of unconditional acceptance, and an inner knowledge that all will be well.
- You can stay here for as long as you like. And when you're ready, gently open your eyes.