

Be kind to yourself

Many people feel ashamed, inadequate, not 'good enough', or even a complete failure because they cannot have children. People may feel that their bodies have failed them, or they may feel that they failed in some way by not pursuing one last opportunity or treatment that would have resulted in achieving pregnancy. They may also attribute their inability to have children to something they did earlier in life.

The reality is that we are all imperfect, and it is part of our human experience to feel shame, insecurity and inadequacy. It is part of our nature not to like our whole selves. Indeed, research has showed that most people are more critical towards themselves than close others, such as friends. Equally problematic, sometimes we get so focused on our negatives that we forget our qualities and strengths. It is important to refocus our attention to regain a more balanced view.

In this activityⁱ, we will ask you to act towards yourself as you act towards your friends, that is, to look at yourself through the eyes of an unconditionally loving imaginary friend.

Let's practice

Try writing about your unfulfilled desire for children and the role that you think you might have played in it. What emotions come up when you think about this? Try to feel your emotions exactly as they are – no more, no less – and then write about them.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Now, think about an imaginary friend who is unconditionally loving, accepting, kind and compassionate. Imagine that this friend can see your strengths and all your weaknesses, including those aspects of yourself that you just wrote about. Reflect about what this friend feels about you. This friend understands your life history and all that has contributed to create you as you are in this moment: your genes, family history, life circumstances, the things that are in and out of your control.

As you write to yourself from the perspective of this imaginary friend, try to infuse your letter with a strong sense of acceptance, kindness, caring, and desire for your health and happiness.

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Follow-up work

ⁱ Adapted from www.self-compassion.org website, by Dr. Kristin Neff.