

## Practicing self-compassion

### Meaningful self-care includes having compassion for ourselves when times are tough.

You might have heard about being 'more kind to yourself' but what does this really mean?

When you're investing so much physical and mental energy into meeting your baby's needs, your own needs often get put to the side. That's why it's important to practice self-compassion.

According to Kirsten Neff, psychologist and pioneer in the field of self-compassion, there are two types of self-compassion, **tender** and **fierce**.



### Compassionate self-talk

"Life is so stressful, but I'm not alone. Other people feel this way too."



## Tender and fierce self-compassion

### Tender self-compassion

This can feel like a parent soothing their crying child. Tender self-compassion involves 'being with' ourselves in an accepting way, for example, comforting ourselves, reassuring ourselves that we aren't alone, and being present with our pain.

### Fierce self-compassion

This involves 'acting in the world' to alleviate suffering. It tends to involve protecting, providing for, and motivating ourselves. Fierce self-compassion is like a grizzly bear who ferociously protects their cubs when threatened.

Sometimes we need to stand tall and say no, draw boundaries, or fight injustice. Or we may need to say yes to ourselves, to do what's needed to be happy rather than putting the needs of other people first.



"In the darkest moments, I often repeated a phrase to myself. It was simple and calming: "You're safe. You're warm. You're loved, and you're fed."  
- Josephine

## What does this mean for busy new parents?

How we talk to ourselves is an important part of self-compassion. Often we are our own worst critic.

In fact, we probably do it without even realising we are doing it. Try to change the tone of your inner voice to one that is kind and gentle. If you are struggling to do this, try imagining what a very compassionate friend might say to you.

Self-compassion might also look like:

- Prioritising your self-care.
- Reaching out to a trusted friend or family member for a reassuring chat.
- Putting yourself first and prioritising what matters to you. For example, focusing on sleep and letting non-essential housework go.
- Listening to your inner voice and focusing on what works best for you and your family.
- Nurturing yourself by having a bath, enjoying a walk or wrapping yourself in a calming weighted blanket.
- Setting boundaries: telling all your family or in-laws that you want no visitors for the first 7 days after bub is born


More self-care and compassion tips:



## PANDA Helpline

The **PANDA Helpline** provides counselling, referral and peer support from parents who have been through similar challenges.

- When someone calls, you will speak with a counsellor or peer worker who understands the challenges of being a new or expecting parent.
- PANDA counsellors and peer workers listen with kindness and compassion, help you explore support options, and can also provide information about appropriate specialist services.
- **If you are concerned for someone's safety**, it's vital that you seek immediate help by contacting either a local acute mental health service or your nearest hospital's emergency department.
- If you believe that someone's life is at immediate risk, call 000.

 PANDA National Helpline 1300 726 306 | Monday - Saturday

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