

NOTES FROM: *Self-Compassion*, by Kristin Neff

SUMMARY: Kristin Neff is one of the world's leading experts on self-compassion, and she makes the compelling argument that as important as it is to possess solid self-esteem, it's *self-compassion* that can help us be kinder to ourselves if our self-esteem is ever threatened.

I believe winning is important. I believe hard work is important. I believe that high achievement in the areas of life that are *meaningful* to us makes our lives better in a real, *tangible way*. But I'm also not blind to the fact that there's *always* going to be someone out there smarter than you, in better shape than you are, richer than you are, with more friends, more of everything you want. It's a losing strategy to base your entire self-worth on what you have, what you do, or what you've achieved.

A much better "strategy" for life is to treat yourself like a very good *friend*, like someone you were responsible for *helping*. Push yourself, yes. Be kind to yourself, *also yes*. The two are *not* mutually exclusive, and Dr. Neff's book will help you get better at the "being kinder to yourself" part.

The fact is that if you had a friend or family member who talked to you in the same way that you sometimes talk to *yourself*, you'd want to get away from them as fast as possible! You might even call the police! *AND* the fire department! Forget all that. This book will help you soften your self-talk, be kinder to yourself, and treat yourself like a really good friend who you want to see happy and healthy and at peace.

"If I have to feel better than you to feel good about myself, then how clearly am I really going to see you, or myself for that matter?"

"We can't always feel special and above average."

"There's almost no one whom we treat as badly as ourselves."

"Self-compassion provides the same benefits as self-esteem, without its drawbacks."

"Compassion is not only relevant to those who are blameless victims, but also to those whose suffering stems from failures, personal weakness, or bad decisions. You know, the kind you and I make every day."

"More often than one might think, we don't realize when we're actually suffering."

"Where is that written contract you signed before birth promising that you'd be perfect, that you'd never fail, and that your life would go absolutely the way you want it to? 'Uh, excuse me. There must be some error. I signed up for the 'everything will go swimmingly until the day I die' plan. Can I speak to the management, please?'"

“As a change of pace, try seeing the best in people, and recognize them for something they’re good at or doing well, rather than finding fault with people.”

“Self-love so often seems unrequited.”

“We can, and perhaps should, feel connected to others in the experience of life and all that entails, rather than feeling isolated and alienated by our suffering.”

“Self-compassion is a powerful trigger for the release of oxytocin.”

“When we are moved by how difficult life is in the moment, somehow the moment isn’t as difficult as it was just a second ago.”

“The only person who is available 24/7 to look after you is you.”

“Our perceived separation from other people is a sort of prison.”

“Who we are, how we think, and what we do is inextricably interwoven with other people and events, which makes the assignment of blame quite ambiguous.”

Thich Nhat Hahn: “If you are a poet, you will see clearly that there is a cloud floating in this sheet of paper. Without a cloud there will be no water; without water, the trees cannot grow, you cannot make paper. So the cloud is in here. The existence of this page is dependent upon the existence of a cloud. Paper and cloud are so close.”

“You can’t stop the waves, but you can learn to surf.”

“We can’t heal what we can’t feel.”

Charlie Chaplin: “Life is a tragedy when seen in a close-up, but a comedy when seen in a long-shot.”

“Did you choose to have that particular thought? Of course you didn’t.”

Herman Hesse: “It is your aversion that hurts, nothing else.”

“Self-compassion is a major protective factor against anxiety and depression, often accounting for between one third and one half of the variation in how anxious or depressed people are.”

“Our subconscious registers any attempt at avoidance or suppression, so that what we’re trying to avoid ends up being amplified.”

“Psychologists have conducted a great deal of research on our ability to consciously suppress unwanted thoughts and emotions. Their findings are clear: we have no such ability.”

"The beauty of self-compassion is that instead of replacing negative feelings with positive ones, new positive emotions are generated by embracing the negative ones."

Marcel Proust: "We are healed from suffering only by experiencing it to the full."

"Research shows that people's self-esteem is more strongly influenced by what they perceive strangers think of them than what their close friends and family think of them."

"Our minds may try to convince us otherwise, but our hearts know that our true value lies in the core experience of being a conscious being who feels and perceives."

"If we're trying to encourage someone to do better, do we really think that telling them (ourselves) that they're awful and stupid and worthless is going to motivate them? Then why do we do it to ourselves?"

"Kindness is a far more effective motivator than self-criticism."

"If one is cruel to himself, how can we expect him to be compassionate with others?"

"In many ways, self-compassion is an altruistic act, because it puts us into the optimal mental and emotional mindset to help others in a sustainable, long-lasting way."

"We must be what we want our children to become."

About Parenthood: "Feeding the hand that bites you."

Mark Twain: "When I was fourteen, my father was so stupid that I could hardly stand to be around the old man. When I turned 21, I was simply amazed at what this elderly gentleman had learned in only seven short years."

"When life gives you lemons, make margaritas!"

"When you're happy for the success of others, then you have a lot more opportunities to be happy than if you only cared about your own success."

"When we're part of a larger whole, we can feel glad whenever one of 'us' has something to celebrate."

"When we feel connected with others, we can fully revel in their glory. But what would happen if we widened that sense of belonging to include all of humanity, not just our local sports team? Then our side would always win."

Thich Nhat Hahn: "You are a wonderful manifestation. The whole universe has come together to make your existence possible."

“If you take your interbeing seriously, then celebrating your achievements isn't self-centered at all, but instead a celebration of what people are capable of.”

“There are always wonderful things to appreciate about ourselves, even if they don't make us unique. The fact that I can breathe, walk, eat, make love, hug a friend - these are all magnificent abilities that are definitely to be celebrated, despite the fact that just about everyone shares these abilities - despite the fact that they are beautifully average.”

“Instead of going around obsessing about all the things that you want to fix in your life, you can marvel at what's not broken.”

“The good and the beautiful is all around us. And within us.”