

Basic Steps in Self-Empathy

*(These steps are written in a particular order but they are effective in almost any order.
Do them in a way that is authentic for you)*

- 1. Engage your Compassionate Witness:** Turn towards your experience rather than away... *“I’m reacting. It’s okay to react.” “I can pause and notice what’s happening inside.” “What’s most important is a compassionate relationship to my experience. I don’t have to have any particular experience.”*
- 2. Resource or Anchor in the Expansive Perspective:** Resource or anchor in a expansive perspective means doing or bringing to mind something that de-escalates reactivity in the moment and helps create access to compassion, wisdom, and skill. Ask yourself: *“What could I remember right now that would help me connect to inner resources or locate in a bigger perspective? Here are some possibilities: 1) Recognize the truth of the moment, “I know that even though I feel scared, I am not in danger.” 2) Bring to awareness resources in your life, “I remember the people who love and support me.” 3) Use your body to shift; stretch, stand or sit tall and take a slow deep breath. 4) Call upon a spiritual practice; recite a grounding mantra or prayer. Write your anchor here:*
- 3. Observation:** Ask yourself: **“What happened?”** Replay what someone said or did or what happened until you find the most recent trigger event for your current experience. Describe the trigger event as a neutral observation (something a video camera could record).
- 4. Interpretation:** Ask yourself: **“What am I telling myself about what happened? What meaning am I making of it?”** If relevant, are you willing to check out this meaning with the other person? If yes, do so right away.
- 5. Name feelings:** For example, *“My chest feels tight.” “I feel angry.” “I feel disconnected.” “I feel content.”*
- 6. Name needs** – *“What needs are met or unmet?” “What’s important to me right now?” “What do I care most about in this situation?” “What needs to I perceive to be threatened or am I hopeful will be met?”*

There might be different layers of needs:

- a. A need for love and reassurance for the part of you that is reacting out of an old wound and core limiting belief. For example, *“Yea, a part of me is feeling scared and wants to know I am safe. Let me look around right now and notice if there is really any danger or not.”*
- b. A need that is directly related to the present situation: *“When my co-worker gives vent to her anger at her computer that doesn’t meet my needs for peace and focus in our work space.”*

Requests: What do you want to ask yourself or someone else to do to begin to meet the needs that are alive for you? NVC requests are specific and do-able so that you will follow through with them. When you keep your commitments to yourself, you build security and confidence. Specific requests answer most of these questions: *What? When? Who? Where? How long? How often?*