

SELF-COMPASSION EXERCISE

#1: THE LIST

APPENDIX
R

While we haven't exactly been subtle about the importance of self-compassion via the work of Dr. Kristin Neff, we really want to drill this concept home: Self-Compassion > Self-Esteem. In fact, it may be time to throw the concept of "self-esteem" out the window. According to Neff, our concept of self-esteem is overly tied to social comparison. In other words, self-esteem relies on our external world whereas self-compassion relies upon our internal world. In consideration of both those worlds, guess which one we have more control over? If you guessed we have more control over our internal world than the external world—you're right. Dr. Neff observed, "When our sense of self-worth stems from being a human being intrinsically worthy of respect—rather than being contingent on obtaining certain ideals—our sense of self-worth is much less easily shaken" (2011).

"The List" is a simple but profound exercise in building our self-compassion. Simply list up to 10 aspects of yourself that play a significant role in your self-esteem—things that either make you feel good or bad about yourself (e.g., job performance, role as a parent, weight, etc.).

1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	
7	
8	
9	
10	

Now, ask yourself the following questions as they relate to each item, and consider whether your answers change how you think about things. Are there ways in which “self-esteem” is leading you astray?

1. Do I want to feel better than others, or to feel connected?
2. Does my worth come from being special, or from being human?
3. Do I want to be perfect, or to be healthy?