

Spirituality - An Aid In Increasing Self-Compassion

by Cassandra Youngson

The new millennium has brought along with it a new vision of the importance of spirituality, and much has to do with the work carried out by eminent scientists. In the past decade, spirituality has ceased to be seen as an optional pursuit and has come to be established as a vital component of health and happiness. At the same time, new studies on self-compassion have revealed that it can play an important role in bolstering human health. In this essay, we discuss the importance of making time for spiritual belief and practice as a means to hone one's self-compassion.



Photo: Larm Rmah

Searching for Self-Compassion

In the east, self-compassion (which can be defined as [being as kind to ourselves](#) as we would to loved ones), has long been considered worthy of pursuit. For centuries, self-compassion has been taught through holistic practices such as yoga, Tai Chi, or meditation. In the Eastern view, self-compassion is essential to maintaining a peaceful state of equilibrium, since life's vicissitudes (such as losing a job or getting divorced) can make us question our worth if we lack the ability to be kind and forgiving to ourselves.

In essence, self-compassion has a different focus from self-confidence. The latter is based on our achievements, the former a purely unconditional exercise of love.

What are the Crucial Elements of Self-Compassion?

The idea of self-compassion rests on three pillars: self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness. Common humanity encourages us to see that we are only human and therefore, we sometimes let ourselves and others down, or fail at our goals.

Mindfulness, meanwhile, is a powerful tool that encourages the mind to remain in the present, rather than the past or future. As noted by best-selling author, Eckhart Tolle, "Unease, anxiety, tension, stress, worry—all forms of fear—are caused by too much future and not enough presence. Guilt, regret, resentment, sadness, bitterness, and all forms of non-forgiveness are caused by too much past, and not enough presence." Mindfulness focuses on being fully present in the 'now,' giving the people and situations before us our full attention.

Spirituality Enhances Mindfulness

Spiritual pursuits are the ideal way to promote mindfulness. Meditation, for instance, encourages practitioners to acknowledge negative thoughts and emotions, but view them as events that are just passing through; temporary waves that do not define who they are.

Because spirituality is such a personal idea, it is up to each individual to find a means to reach a state of mindfulness (through prayer, experiences in nature, or even arts such as tarot reading).

Tarot cards can boost spirituality and peace by encouraging greater self-awareness. That is, the rich symbolism in the cards can be used to identify aspects of our lives that may stand in the way of peace and happiness.

Some cards are particularly symbolic; think the Ten of Wands, which depicts a man carrying 10 heavy wands. When you look at your cards, you can use each image to think of factors in your life that are standing in the way of your happiness and wellbeing. Meditation, reciting mantras, or carrying out visualization exercises also keep our mind focused and serene.

Because self-compassion has such a strong mindfulness component, practices such as meditation, yoga, tarot and the like can help bring the mind to the "here and now," encourage us to make important changes in our lives, and realize that we have no obligation to be perfect. After all, we are only human.