

What Would Your Friend Say To You?

Often the easiest way to appreciate ourselves is by looking through the eyes of someone who loves us or if we feel there isn't someone who appreciates us unconditionally, then create an imaginary friend who does. If we aren't ready or able to extend compassion to ourselves, it's often helpful to imagine what our friend would say to us.

1. Start by simply envisioning the loving, forgiving and gentle words of a good friend who is kind, compassionate and who knows all of your positive attributes and imperfections, including those aspects of yourself you may try and hide from others. You might want to write down some of the positive words they say about you and reflect on the words of your friend who accepts you fully and exactly as you are.
2. You could also role-play the part of your inner critic and your friend and create a conversation between the two of you. Try writing down the exchange, noting the words of your inner critic as well as the kind remarks of your friend. What would your friend say to you about how you're coping as someone who fully understands the pain you are experiencing from your loss and who demonstrates nothing but love and compassion for you? Leave this exercise for a while and come back to it at a later time – do you still believe the words of your inner critic? Is there anything you would like to change/say differently to Your friend?



3. Imagine that your friend wants to leave you with one important thought to take away and reflect on. Write this thought down somewhere where you will see it frequently – every time you read it, you feel comforted and soothed by it and can imagine your friend saying it to you. If you like, you could write it down over and over again or ideally say it out loud to yourself (like an affirmation or mantra) until you truly begin to absorb and feel the essence of it.

If you find this exercise difficult, reverse it instead and think about what you would say or may have said before to a friend experiencing a difficult time in their life, possibly a bereavement of their own or even another situation eg. going through a divorce. Imagine saying your kind, compassionate words to them and think about saying those same words to yourself. Why should it be any different?

