

Self-compassion

Self-compassion has 2 sides to it. The masculine and the feminine. Some refer to it as the yin and yang.

The masculine element is about how we act in the world, our Yang.

The feminine element is about our way of being with ourselves, our Yin.

When we experience difficulties and stresses, how we provide ourselves with compassion in a balanced way is important to our general self-nourishment. The two elements can be described as either protective, providing and motivating (Masculine, Yang) or comforting, soothing and validating (Feminine, Yin) We will all self-nurture in different ways. Some people may feel the need to take actions to feel safe and provide for first and others may feel the need to comfort and soothe themselves first. However, it is important that we ensure we cover a range of both yin and yang to achieve balanced self-compassion.

In this exercise, we aim to provide ourselves with balanced self-compassion via specific questions. Whether you prefer to work on your masculine first or feminine, these questions will help you to stay balanced by nurturing you while also taking any actions needed too!

Think of a situation you are struggling with either right now or recently and apply these questions to that situation.

First the Masculine:

Protect- What is one thing that you can do to stop others hurting you or stop the harm that you are causing to yourself?

Provide- What is one thing you can do to give yourself what you need?

Motivate- How can you motivate yourself with kindness, support and love rather than criticism?

Now the Feminine:

Comfort- What is one thing you can do to take care of your emotional needs?

Soothe- What is one thing you can do to make yourself feel calmer and more at ease?

Validate- What is one thing you can say to yourself to validate or accept your feelings about the situation at this moment?

Use these questions to write down actions that you can take for each, specifically surrounding the situation to see how you can create a self-compassion plan. Use this with any other difficult situations going forward.

For example, I was feeling overwhelmed and burnt out relating to my work. I'm a Yang before Yin and so I first stopped hurting myself by announcing I was taking a break from my work for a few weeks. I gave myself what I needed by turning on my 'out of office' on all of my communication, creating an announcement pop up on my website and social media and informed any clients of my need to take time off. I motivated myself by reminding myself that I cannot be my best for others unless I am well in myself. I then moved into yin, looking at my sleep pattern and creating a plan of self-care that would soothe and comfort me, while coming to a space of acceptance around how I was feeling. It took 6 weeks but since returning to work I have felt much more able to balance everything I need and what others need from me, with better boundaries around how I work when I work and how that needs to look.

For those who may find it helpful, I've included an action table on the following page.

Self Compassion Action Table

Yin/ Feminine		Yang/ Masculine	
Aspect	Action	Aspect	Action
Comfort: What is one thing you can do to take care of your emotional needs?		Protect: What is one thing that you can do to stop others hurting you or stop the harm that you are causing to yourself?	
Soothe: What is one thing you can do to make yourself feel calmer and more at ease?		Provide: What is one thing you can do to give yourself what you need?	
Validate: What is one thing you can say to yourself to validate or accept your feelings about the situation at this moment?		Motivate: How can you motivate yourself with kindness, support and love rather than criticism?	