



## My self-compassion journal





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## What is self-compassion?

Researcher Kristin Neff says “There is an alternative to that harsh self-talk: self-compassion.

“self-compassion provides an island of calm, a refuge from the stormy seas of endless positive and negative self-judgment.” As Neff defines it, self-compassion entails three components:

- “First, it requires self-kindness, that we be gentle and understanding with ourselves rather than harshly critical and judgmental.”
- “Second, it requires recognition of our common humanity, feeling connected with others in the experience of life rather than feeling isolated and alienated by our suffering.”
- “Third, it requires mindfulness—that we hold our experience in balanced awareness, rather than ignoring our pain or exaggerating it.”

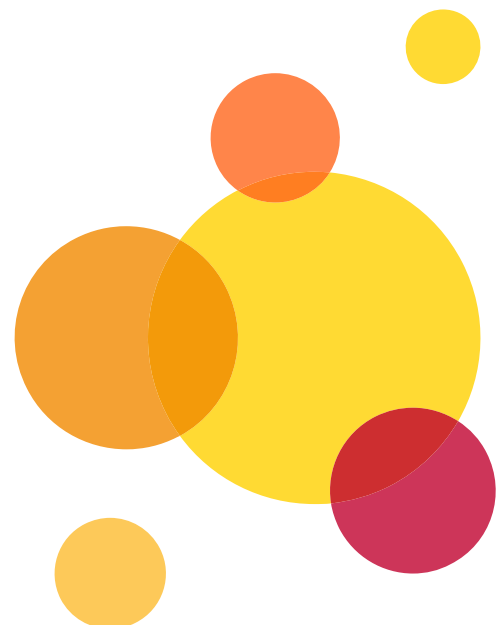
**Self-kindness:** being supportive and understanding towards ourselves when we’re having a hard time, rather than being harshly self-critical.

**Connectedness:** remembering that everyone makes mistakes and experiences difficulties at times. We are not alone!

**Mindfulness:** self-compassion involves recognising when we’re stressed or struggling without being judgemental or over-reacting.

Self-compassion can be practiced by following a 3 step process as follows: (Kristin Neff)

- 1. Mindfulness:** acknowledge your suffering ‘I’m really struggling with this’  
Become aware of how you are feeling. Notice what is happening in your body and in your thoughts.
- 2. Common humanity:** normalise your suffering ‘Many people feel like this in this situation’  
Connect your experience with that of all parents everywhere.
- 3. Self-Kindness.** Be kind to yourself in your suffering.



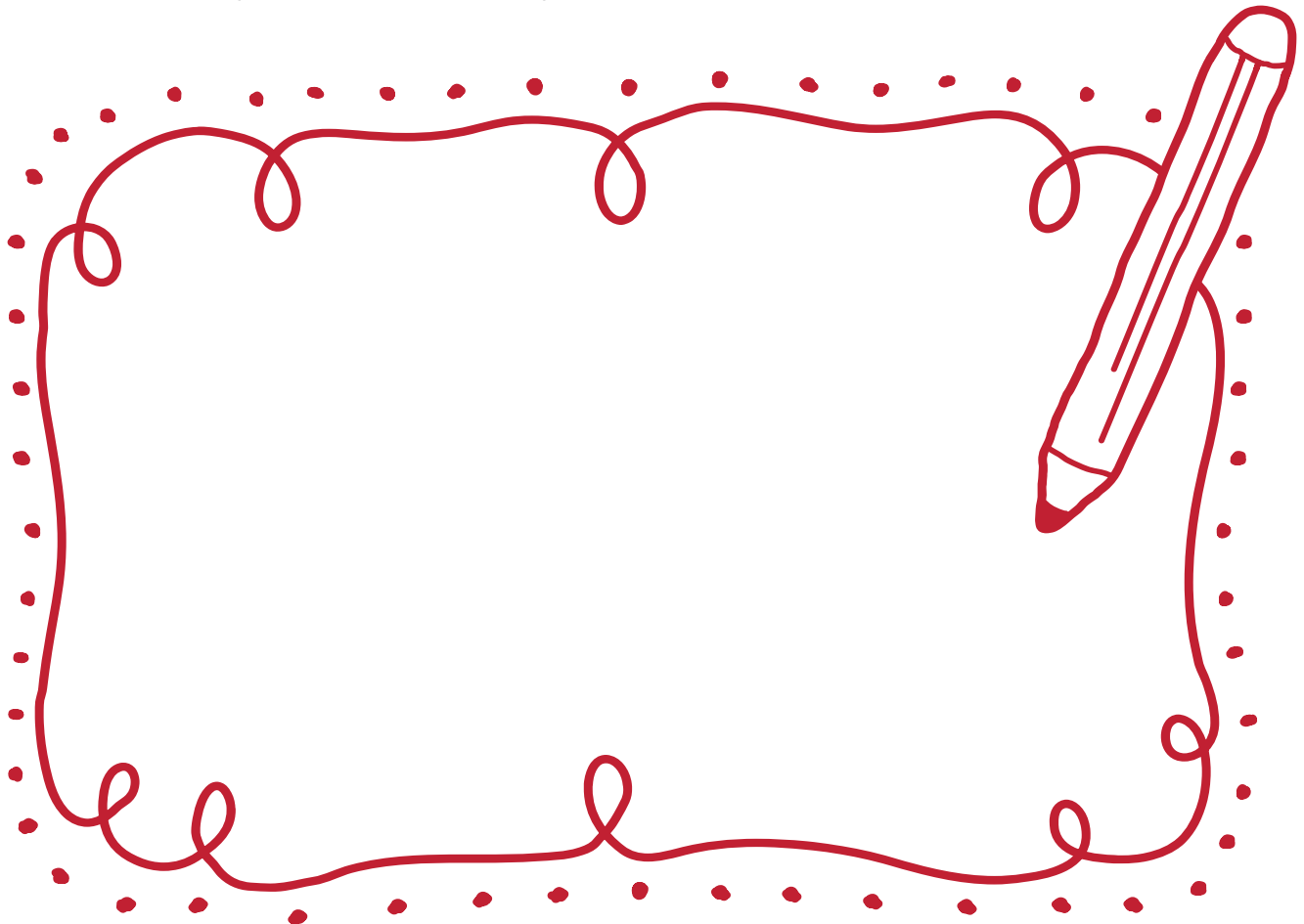
# A mindful start



There are lots of activities that we unconsciously repeat for tens, hundreds or thousands of times every day. Walking, breathing, drinking, eating, listening, and even looking are among examples.

A mindful activity is about deciding and doing any of these activities for a couple of minutes intentionally. You will experience examples of mindful breathing, mindful walking, etc. during this program. However, you may design your own mindful activity.

Choose any activity that you keep doing during the day, turn it into a short intentional mindful activity, and write or draw your own mindful activity in the space below.



It is the repetition that builds the capacity and makes a difference. Repeat your tailored mindful activity as many times as you enjoy each day. By doing this simple exercise you are building your mindfulness muscles to use when you need them the most in challenging parenting moments.



# Chapter 1: Finding Safety After Violence



If you are able to be kind to yourself, what are some of the qualities that you have that you can remind yourself about and draw on to help you through a tough time.

## Are you:

Kind, loyal, playful, sensitive, courageous, helpful, loving, empathetic, calm, funny, strong, supportive, thoughtful, warm, caring, accepting.

Reflect on your own qualities.

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Even if you didn't grow up with good models of compassion, try to remember that self-compassion is a skill you can develop through practice. When you feel self-criticism rising in your head, put your hand on your heart—and talk to yourself as you would a dear friend who is suffering.





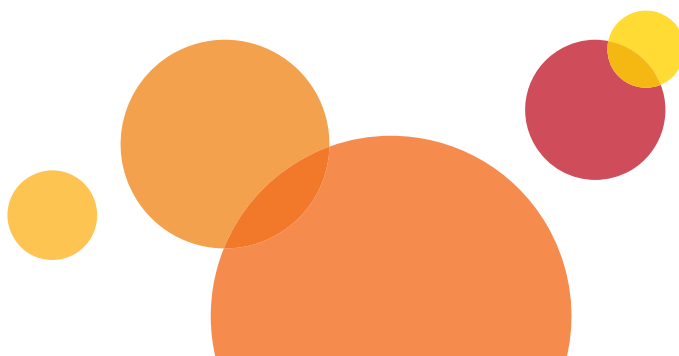
## Take routine self-compassion breaks

During the exhaustion and confusion of being a parent, it's important to take time for yourself, i.e. getting a meal on the table at the end of a busy day, organising mornings, shopping with children, etc.

These are the moments when you might try to take a self-compassion break. What does that look like?

- First, accept the moment with a statement like, "This is hard."
- Next, acknowledge that every parent has felt this way—probably every parent in the history of world!

**Last, offer yourself kindness, such as saying, "I will take 5 minutes for a cup of tea, I will go for a walk, etc."**





## Head, Heart, Hand Reflections...



Your thoughts about this week's chapter:

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Any feelings, memories, images evoked by the chapter:

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What might you do as a result of this chapter?

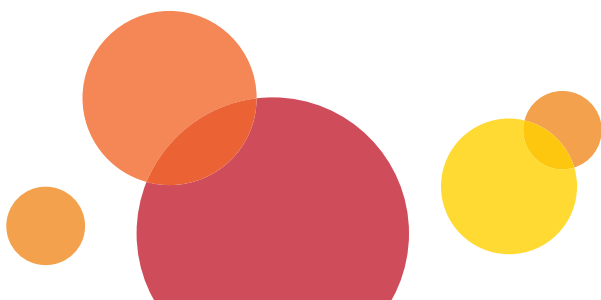
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# Chapter 2: Challenging the messages of violence



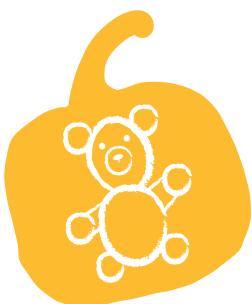
## Try to get a clear sense of how you talk to yourself. Recognise your inner-critic.

Notice whenever you're feeling bad about something, reflect about what you've just said to yourself:

- What words do you actually use?
- Are there key phrases or words that come up over and over again?
- What is the tone of your inner critics voice – harsh, cold, angry?

**“Unlike self-criticism which asks if you’re good enough, self-compassion asks what’s good for you?”**

Kristin Neff





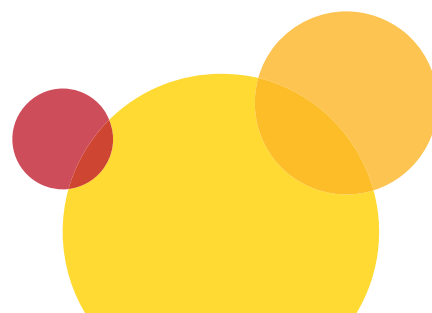
## Chapter 2: Challenging the messages of violence



What can you do now that you are aware of your inner critic and negative self-talk?

A large, hand-drawn yellow speech bubble with a thick yellow outline. Inside the bubble are approximately 15 horizontal white lines for writing. The bubble has a tail that points towards the bottom right, connecting to a circular callout box.

**Make an active effort to soften the negative/unhelpful voice, but do so with kindness rather than self-judgement. Talk to yourself in a kind, caring way like you would to a good friend who is having a hard time.**



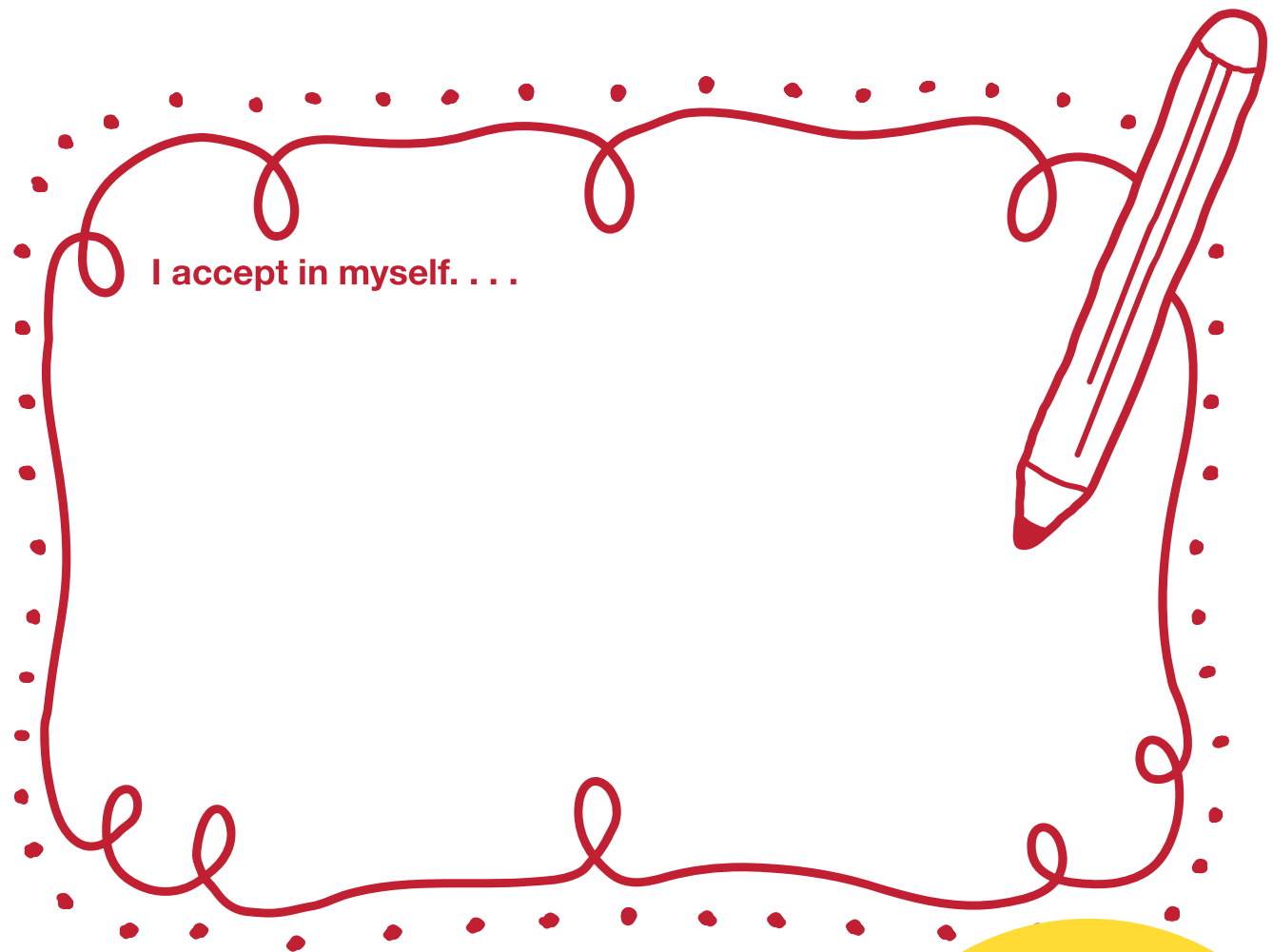
# Chapter 2: Challenging the messages of violence



## Reframe the observations made by your inner critic in a friendly, positive way.

If you're having trouble thinking of what words to use, you might want to imagine what a very compassionate friend would say to you in this situation. It might help to use a term of endearment that strengthens expressed feelings of warmth and care (but only if it feels natural).

While engaging in this supportive self-talk, you might want to try gently stroking your arm, or holding your face tenderly in your hands. The important thing is that you start acting kindly, be accepting and feelings of true warmth and caring will eventually follow.



**“Self-compassion is a form of acceptance of ourselves while we’re in pain”**

Christopher Germer



## Head, Heart, Hand Reflections...



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## Don't underestimate the power of the small steps

Search in Youtube for “Domino chain reaction” or watch the video through the following link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y97rBdSYbkg&vl=en>

Acknowledge the strength and courage to take the small steps by asking yourself the following questions:

- How would you and your child’s story be different if you didn’t take even the smallest steps to keep yourself and your child safe? How did you know that small action would work?
- What strength did it take? What do you think your child would say to you if they could understand how much strength it took to care for them in your family during that time?
- What do you say to yourself now after thinking about it? Talk to yourself in a kind, caring way like you would to a good friend who is having a hard time

A large, hand-drawn orange speech bubble with a tail pointing towards the bottom right. Inside the bubble are ten horizontal white lines for writing.



# Chapter 3: Reclaiming the Messages of My Parenting

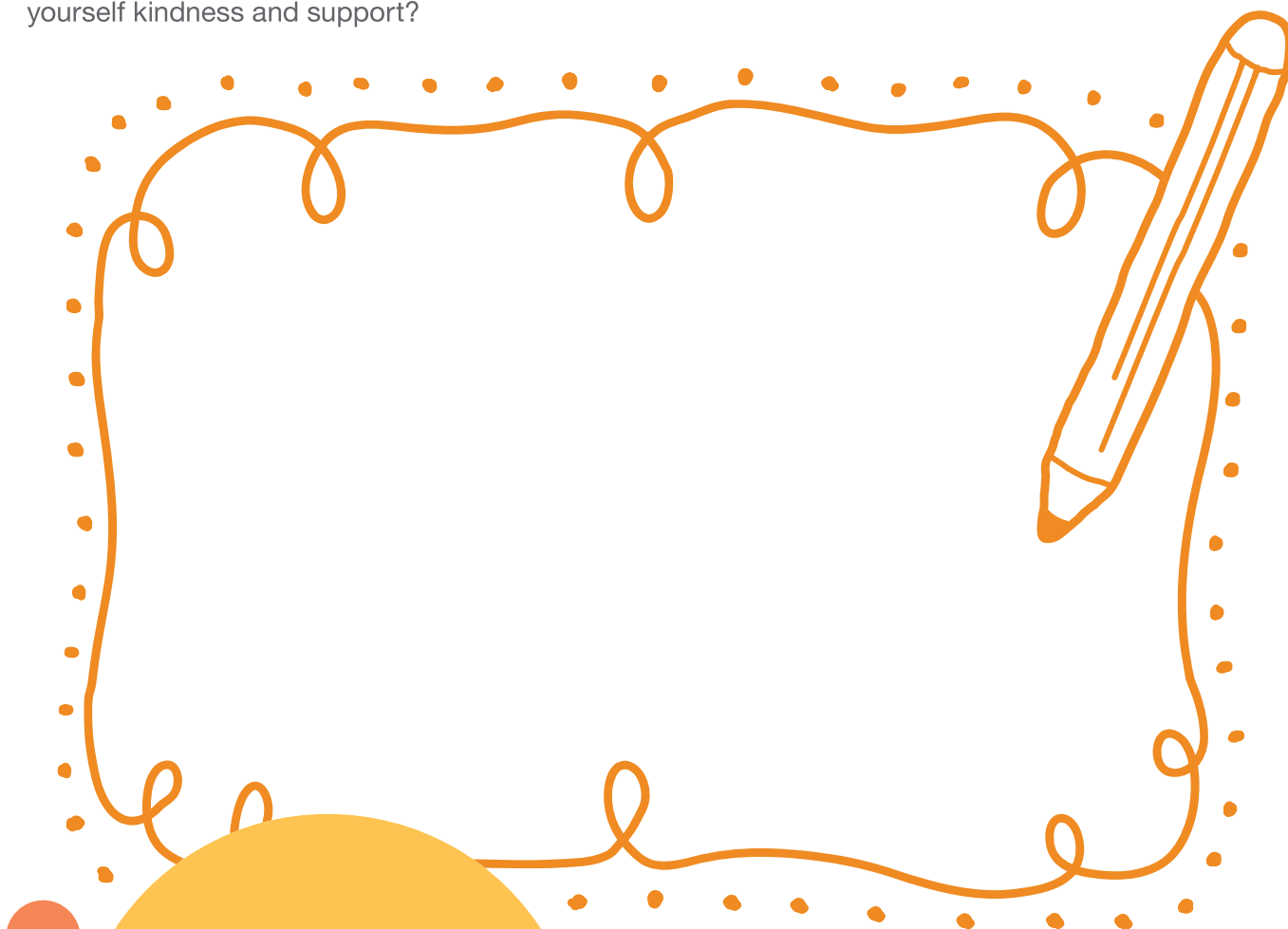


**Think about a time when a good friend was having a hard time with something where they've made a mistake/feel inadequate/being self-critical or feeling stressed.**

How do you respond when a good friend is suffering?

You might say: "Oh that must be so hard for you... Don't think badly of yourself up about it... you're only human. We all make mistakes. Can I give you a hug?"

Think of a time when you have been stressed. What might you say to yourself if you are offering yourself kindness and support?



**"Self-compassion is simply giving the same kindness to ourselves that we would give to others".**

Christopher Germer





## Head, Heart, Hand Reflections...



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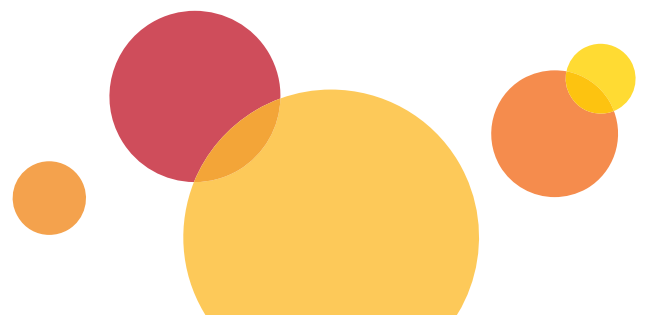
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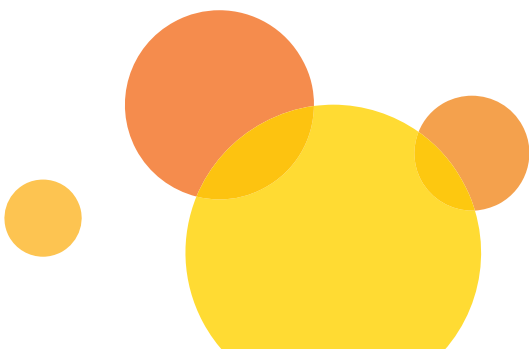
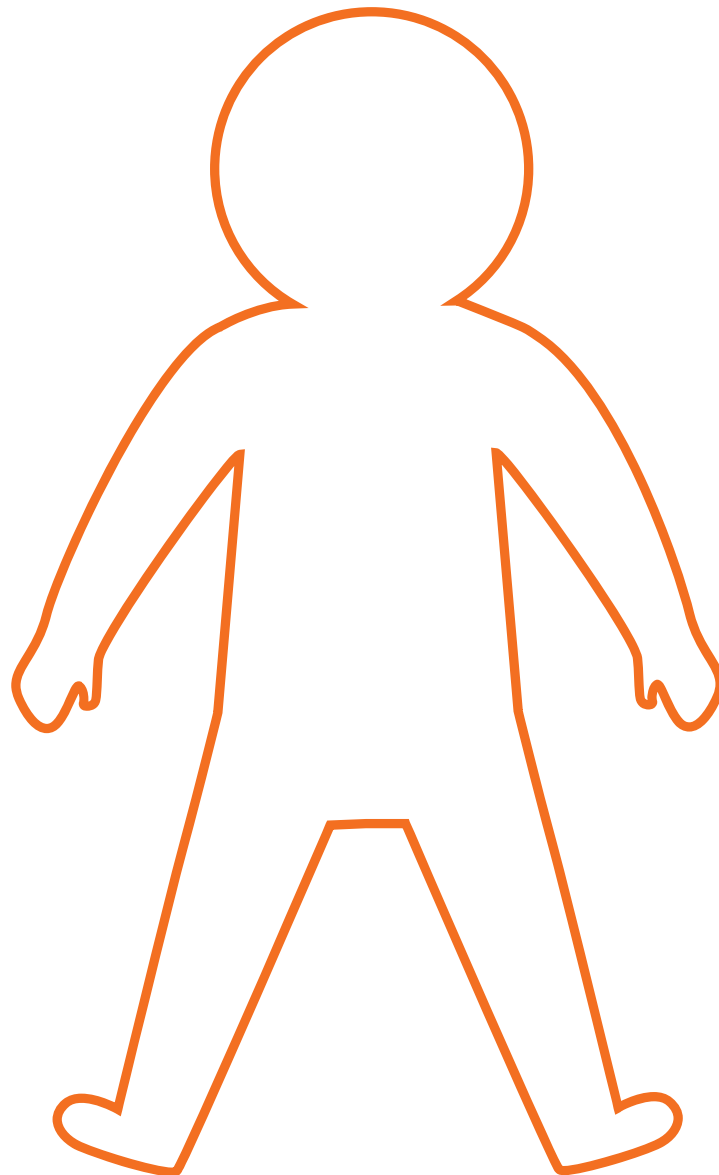


## Review, Draw, Write

Review the sorts of things you do and say to a good friend going through a stressful experience.

Does your breathing change? Your heart rate? What about your shoulders? Fists? Jaw?

Draw/write around the figure how your body is affected when you tell somebody that everything will be OK.





# Chapter 4: Understanding the Messages from My Children



Prescription (My self-care activity)	Dose (How long?)	Frequency				
		Daily	Weekly	Fortnightly	Monthly	Yearly
Call or visit a friend or family						
Practice breathing / muscle relaxation						
Walk, play sport or exercise						
Have a bath						
Read a book or magazine						
Have one-to-one time with your partner						
Watch a movie						
Listen or dance to music						
Write, paint or play an instrument						
Cook your favourite meal						
Go out for dinner						
Do some gardening						
See a counsellor						
Go away for a weekend						
Go on holiday						

Displayed:

Witnessed:

Name:





## Head, Heart, Hand Reflections...



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# Chapter 5: Changing the Messages for my Child



Draw/write how being compassionate towards myself has changed how my child/ren see themselves.

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin orange border, intended for drawing or writing. It occupies most of the page's central area.

Self-compassion is not always easy....it takes courage and commitment... but it has huge pay offs” especially for your children. Your children eat better, sleep better, are less anxious, are more social etc.



## Listening to children

Write down a step by step recipe about how you can engage in deep listening with you children. Write each step as if it is a favourite recipe that has been passed down through the family and everyone loves.

The steps might include:

- Create a physical space for the deep listening to occur (no distractions)
- Decide on the length of the deep listening activity
- Be prepared for how you will respond to the positive experience your child shares
- Be prepared for how you will respond when your child shares something that is difficult to hear
- How will you end the deep listening activity so that you both feel okay?



A large, hand-drawn orange speech bubble outline that serves as a writing area. Inside the bubble, there are approximately 15 horizontal lines for writing. At the bottom left of the bubble, there is a small yellow icon of a hand with fingers spread, resembling a 'rock on' or 'I love you' gesture.

# Chapter 5: Changing the Messages for my Child



**“Deep listening as listening in reciprocal relationships without judgment just try to understand.”**

Judy Atkinson, 2017

Try to engage in regular deep listening activities with your child, write about what happened and what you learnt.



## Head, Heart, Hand Reflections...



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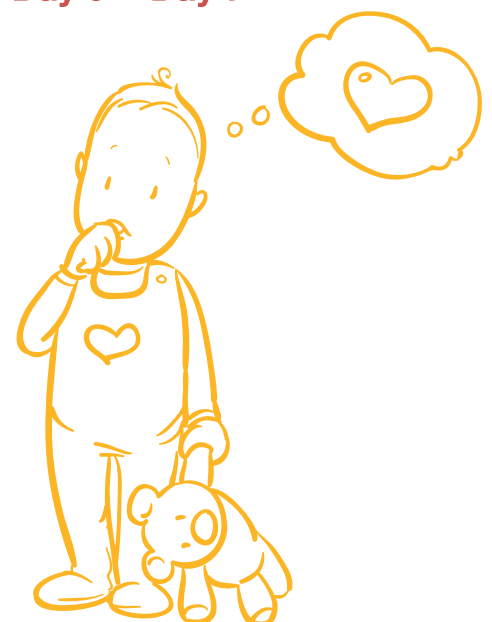
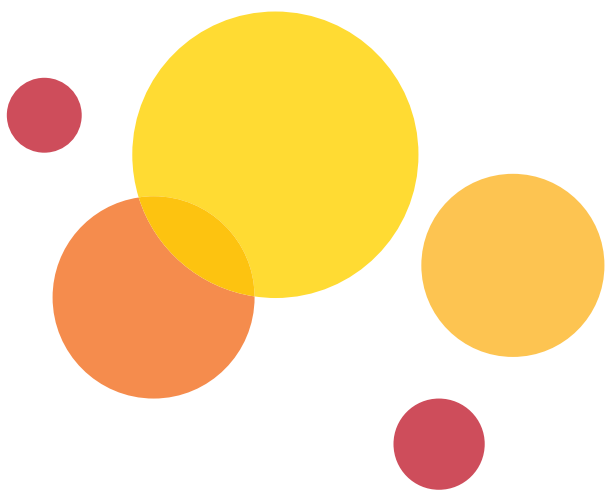
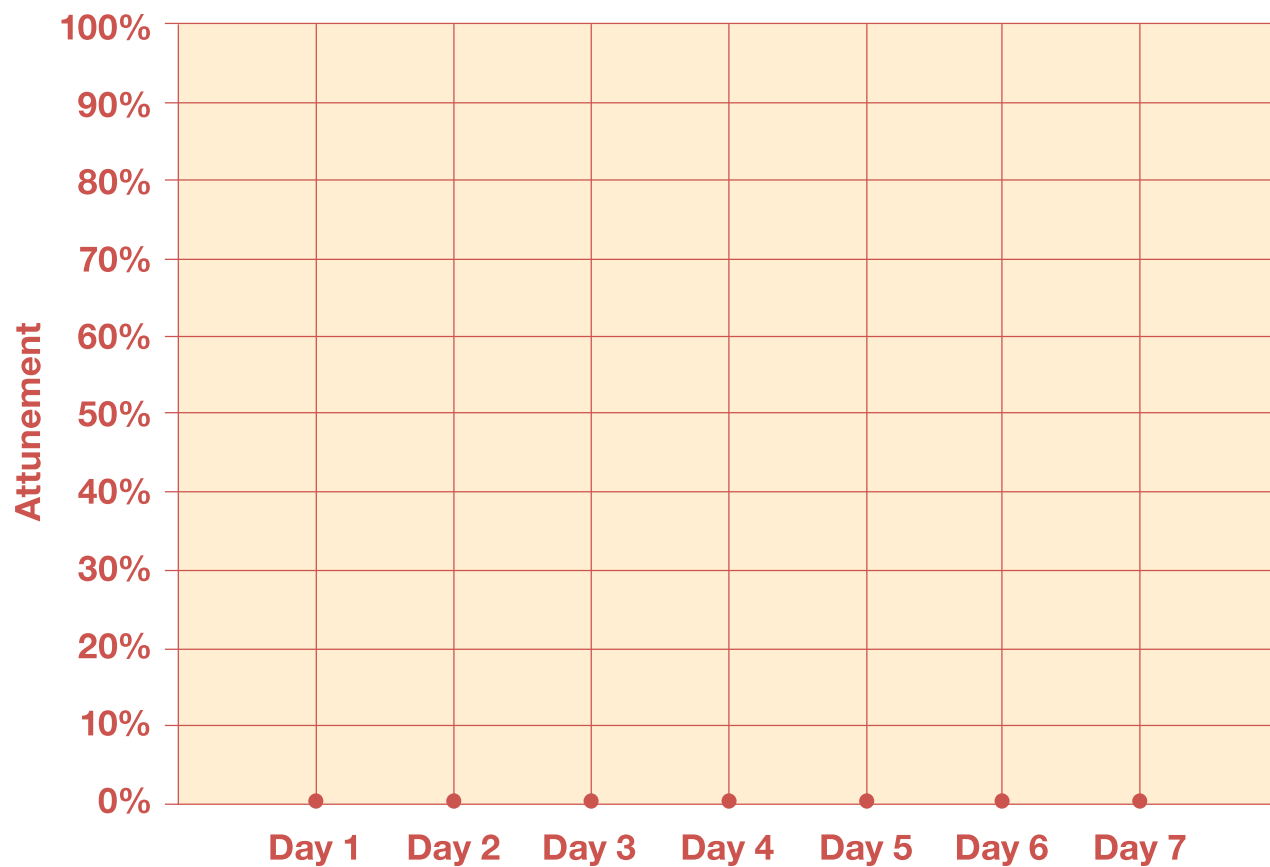
## My parenting chart

Think of the last 7 days with your children. If you were to put the level of attunement between yourself and your child into numbers, what would be the percentage for each day?

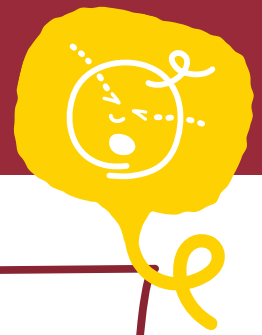
First draw the “expected line” which described how attuned you expected your relationship to be.

Second draw the “actual line” that describes your actual line of attunement for each day.

Please use two different colours.







## Think of a time when your child had BIG feelings.

- How did their behaviour make you feel?
- What happens in your body in this situation?
- What did you say to yourself? Was it negative or positive?
- What did you do then? Did you criticise or nurture yourself?



Self-compassion is being supportive and kind to yourself, especially during times of difficulty and stress.



## Head, Heart, Hand Reflections...



Your thoughts about this week's chapter:

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Any feelings, memories, images evoked by the chapter:

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What might you do as a result of this chapter?

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# Chapter 7: Connecting the Stories of our Family

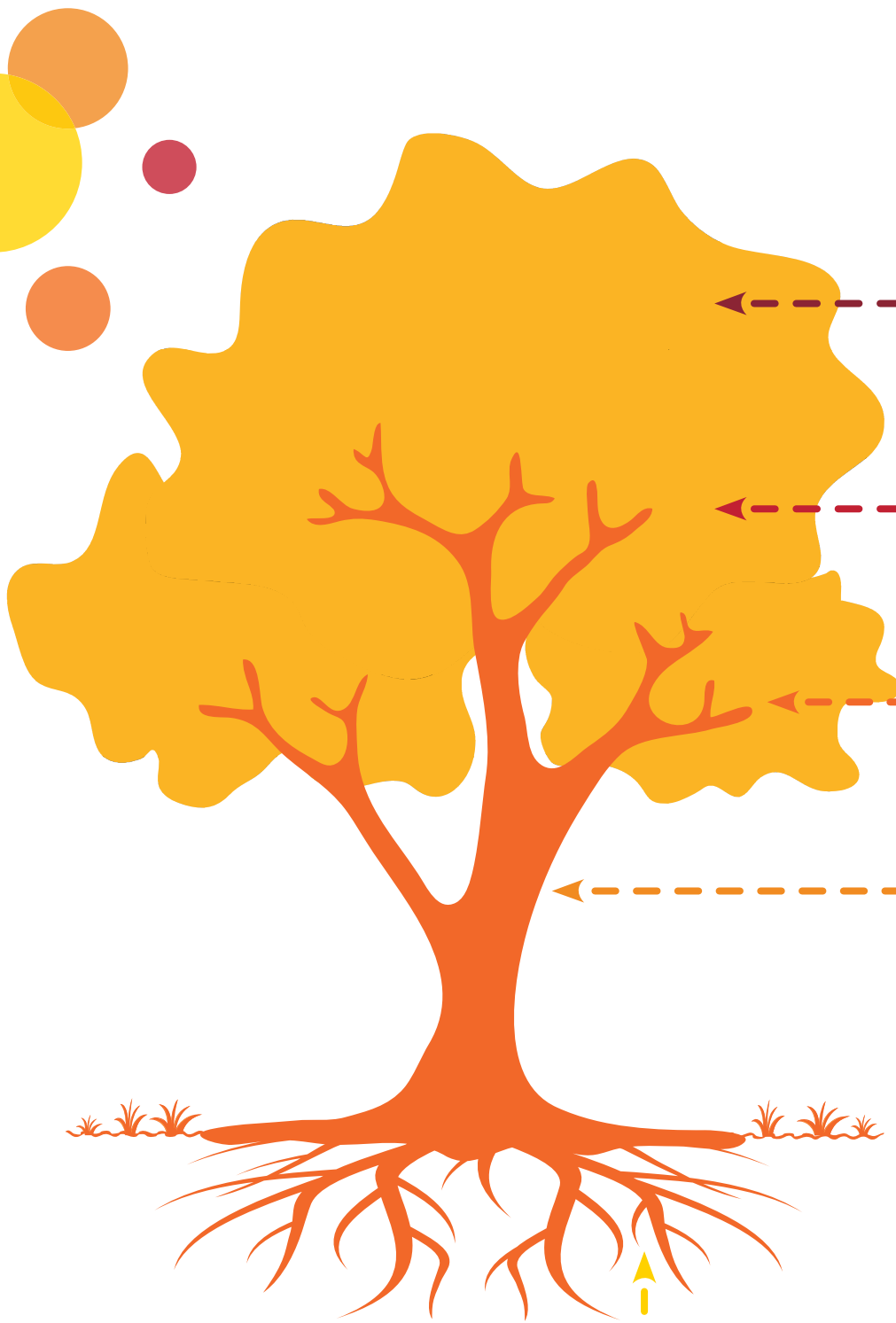


## Visualise the presence of someone important to you when you need parenting support.

Is there anything worse than an aeroplane meltdown? When your child is crying about needing to sit still for hours on end, the glares of other people from the seats around you can make you feel very alone and despondent.

Visualise displacing those glares with a dear friend, partner, parent by your side, giving you support and help.





## The Fruits

represent your children.

Draw them on your tree in a way that says something about each child.

## The Leaves

represent your values and your skills.

## The Branches

represent your hopes and wishes for your children.

## The Trunk

represent your strongest supports.

## The Earth

represent all those things which keep you 'grounded' and make you feel stable and strong.

## The Roots

represent where you have come from, your family history and important places and people from your past.





## The Fruits



If you think about your children as gifts that you will pass on to the next generation what are some of the messages you would like them to take with them?

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## The Leaves



What are your values and your strongest skills? Who did you learn these from? Think about how you are passing those values and skills on to your children.

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## The Branches



What are your hopes and wishes for your children? Where did they come from?

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## The Trunk



Who are the people or organisations you feel comfortable to turn to for help when you need support?

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## The Earth



Write about the things that you do to nurture yourself to make you feel good and to keep you calm.

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## The Roots



Think about the people from your childhood who were most important to you. Who were they and what are some of the most important messages they gave you?

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## Head, Heart, Hand Reflections...



Your thoughts about this week's chapter:

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Any feelings, memories, images evoked by the chapter:

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What might you do as a result of this chapter?

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**May I be filled with loving kindness**

**May I be well**

**May I find joy**

**May I find peace**







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