

## Soften, Soothe and Allow

(Guided meditation at: <http://self-compassion.org/soften,soothe,allow.MP3>)

Please find a comfortable position, close your eyes, and take three relaxing breaths. Perhaps place your hand on your heart for a few moments to remind yourself that you are in the room, and to bring kindness to yourself.

Bring awareness to your body and the sensations occurring there in the present moment. Then find your breath in the heart region and begin to track each breath with mindful awareness.

Now let yourself recall a mild-moderately difficult situation that you are in right now, perhaps a health problem, stress in a relationship, or a loved one in pain. Do not choose a very difficult problem, or a trivial problem—choose a problem that can generate a little stress in your body when you think of it. Now clearly visualize the situation. Who was there? What was said? What happened?

### Labeling

Now see if you can name the strongest emotion—a difficult emotion— associated with that situation: anger? sadness? grief? confusion? fear? longing? despair? Repeat the name of the emotion to yourself in a gentle, understanding voice, as if you were validating for a friend what he or she is feeling: “That’s longing.” “That’s grief.”

### Mindfulness of Emotion in the Body

Now try to locate the difficult emotion in your body. Where is it centered? In your head, your throat, your heart, your stomach? What is the sensation like? Is it hard,

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tight, tingling, cold, pulsating, etc? Sometimes all you will feel is numbness – you can bring your attention to this sensation as well.

### Soften, Soothe, and Allow

Soften into that location in your body. Let the muscles be soft without a requirement that they become soft, like simply applying heat to sore muscles. You can say, “soft...soft...soft...” quietly to yourself, to enhance the process. Remember that you are not trying to make the sensation go away—you are just being with them with loving awareness.

Now soothe yourself for struggling in this way. Put your hand over your heart and feel your body breathe. Perhaps kind words arise in our mind, such as, “Oh my dear, this is such a painful experience. May I grow in ease and well-being.”

If you wish, you can also direct kindness to the part of your body that is under stress by placing your hand in that place. It may help to think of your body as if it were the body of a beloved child. You can say kind words to yourself, or just repeat, “soothe...soothe...soothe.”

Allow the discomfort to be there. Abandon the wish for the feeling to disappear. Let the discomfort come and go as it pleases, like a guest in your own home. You can repeat, “allow...allow...allow.”

“Soften, soothe, and allow.” “Soften, soothe, and allow.” You can use these three words like a mantra, reminding yourself to incline with tenderness toward your suffering.

If you experience too much discomfort with an emotion, stay with your breath until you feel better. Slowly open your eyes when you’re ready.