

Discussion Guide: The Promise of Self-Compassion

Please use the questions below to guide your discussion after listening to the corresponding episode of Looking Up. The goal of the discussion guides is to build community and support learning about an important topic in women's leadership development. We've included a few suggestions to read further if you want to learn more.

Begin:

Establish norms. Take a moment to affirm the importance of a safe space, explain what that looks like in a group discussion like this, and name other conditions necessary for a comfortable discussion where everyone can contribute with authenticity and vulnerability.

Discuss:

1. Do you relate to Shivani, the woman profiled in the episode, who uses self-criticism as a source of motivation? Do you agree with the idea that a **"benefit"** of self-criticism is that it gives you a sense of control when faced with a problem?
2. Do you see a connection between perfectionism and self-criticism? How might a constant drive to be better affect your inner critic? What have you observed in others? What have you observed in yourself?
3. Do you notice a difference between how you treat people close to you when they suffer or feel inadequate, and how you treat yourself?
4. What do we lose when we instinctively blame ourselves or our ability for a problem, and exclude external factors or circumstances? What are we not able to see or do?
5. Think about something that is causing you strong feelings of self-criticism or even shame. What reasons beyond you might be the cause of the problem? Try reflecting on the prompt, **"If this were not all about me, what else might be true?"** Share if you are comfortable.
6. When you first heard about self-compassion in the episode, what did you think? Does this feel like an unrealistic or foreign concept? Did the research on self-compassion challenge your assumptions?
7. Discuss which of the three steps of self-compassion you found most helpful: Mindfulness (connecting with your feelings without judging them, and empathizing with yourself); Self-Kindness (talking to yourself the way you would to a close friend); or Common Humanity (reminding yourself of others who struggle the way you are, and that you are not alone).

Close: What will you take from this conversation going forward?

Go Further:

self-compassion.org

Kristin Neff, [Self-Compassion: The Proven Power of Being Kind to Yourself](#)