

A.C.A.L.M.E.R.M.E

**EMPATHY FOR  
OURSELVES**

## **EMPATHY FOR OURSELVES**

I want to stop for a moment and acknowledge you for everything you've been through. The mountains of emotional pain you've climbed, and the hours, days, months and years of loneliness, sadness, and grief that brought you here. It's an achievement that you're still willing to do what it takes to release yourself from the ties that have bound you to the pain of your past. When was the last time you looked in the mirror and acknowledged yourself for how far you've come?

Empathy is about having compassion for our experiences, but it's also about understanding the limits our experiences have placed on us. Whatever's been done to us or said to us, we can still go from strength to strength but sometimes we need to do it minute-by-minute.

If we've never been shown empathy, we won't know what it looks like, and we won't practice it. We're often so resistant to being a victim and feeling sorry for ourselves that saying 'poor me' feels self-indulgent and wrong. But empathising with ourselves doesn't mean we feel sorry for ourselves or that we're trapped in victimhood. It means we recognise that what we experienced wasn't normal. It came at a high price to our progress and psychological strength, and self-empathy is our reward.

We know we've been emotionally challenged by what we've been through; self-empathy means we're prepared to treat ourselves with patience and kindness as we conquer our battles and win our emotional war. There are no brave faces required here. Judge Mental has left the room. All you need is your truth about how you feel right now. Practice empathy and speak kindly and compassionately to yourself in those moments when you feel overwhelmed. You always have the exit option if you need it. Honour your journey. Know your limits.

## **CHALLENGE IT TO CHANGE IT JOURNAL PROMPTS**

### EMPATHY

- How will you show empathy to yourself for the tough times you've been through?
- Next time you find yourself in a tough situation, what will you do and say to yourself?
- How will you speak to yourself from now on?
- If you showed a difficult person empathy, what do you think would happen?

If you offer empathy to someone else and an uncomfortable response triggers you, don't panic. It's completely normal to feel unsettled or even embarrassed if your offer of empathy feels rejected. Remember not to make it mean anything bad about you. Whatever response you receive, honour the progress you've made and leave it at that. You've shown someone that they matter despite their discomfort, and whether they show it or not, they will remember how your kindness made their pain feel validated.

They have also been a mirror for you and shown you that rejecting empathy is quite normal when you're not accustomed to it. Practice giving yourself empathy and allow yourself to be a mirror for others.

**Affirmation:** *I honour how far I've come; I respect what I've survived, and I choose to meet myself with kindness every day.*

## **A LITTLE NOTE ON OUR NERVOUS SYSTEM**

When we're children and we're blamed for things going wrong - for other people's problems, moods, or pain - our nervous system learns to interpret any suggestion of blame or a potential problem as incoming threats to our safety and survival. Now as adults - even if it's subtle or not even about us - our body reacts like it's back in those moments of being unfairly accused and in imminent danger.

It's not just "overreacting" - it's our survival system doing exactly what it was wired to do. It scans for danger - am I going to be blamed again? It gets defensive - I must protect myself before they hurt me. Or it shuts down completely - I must stop the threat.

These feelings are still there after all these years because our nervous system is **pattern-based, not logic-based**. It doesn't care that you're an adult now. It still holds the blueprint from when you were small. You're affirming, however unwittingly, that, "when problems come up, I am the target. I will be blamed. I must defend myself."

That's why even gentle comments or neutral statements can make you feel attacked or on guard. It's old wiring trying to keep you safe. How can you start changing this? Here are a few powerful but gentle steps:

### **Name it in the moment**

When you notice yourself tensing up, becoming frustrated, or feeling like you want to push back, pause and say to yourself: this is my old 'blame alarm' going off but I don't need it anymore. I'm safe right now. This helps you separate the past from the present.

### **Soothe your body first**

Because your reaction is coming from the fear centre in your brain (fight or flight), you can calm it with a breathing technique (that I'm about to teach you) and a positive affirmation: 'it's okay, I'm not in danger'. Keep your feet planted firmly on the floor.

### **Reframe what's being said**

Instead of automatically hearing, 'there's a problem, so it must be my fault,' consciously tell yourself: 'there's a problem, I'm not to blame and I don't have to fix it.' You can even make it playful: not everything is my circus, and they are not my clowns...

### **Heal the old wound**

Ultimately, these reactions soften when the original wound gets acknowledged and healed. That means:

- Validating that as a child you were unfairly blamed.
- Grieving the time lost as you carried the adult's problems.

- Reparenting yourself with compassion: little me, you didn't deserve that. You were just a kid.

Journaling, therapy, or even talking to yourself in the mirror can start to rewrite these old scripts.

### **A script for yourself**

When you feel defensive or blamed, gently say to yourself:

- I'm allowed to be human.
- Not everything is my fault.
- I don't have to defend myself against the ghosts of the past.

### **Daily practice: The "Blame Release Pause"**

Notice when you feel that restrictive, defensive, bracing feeling, and pause. Put your hand on your heart, name the feeling. Say quietly: *this is my old blame wound. It's okay to feel this.*

Imagine yourself breathing out the old blame, breathing in safety. Reassure yourself. Whisper: I am safe now. Not everything is my fault. I don't have to carry this anymore.