

Being Kind to Yourself



Why does speaking kindly to yourself work?

When you consistently practice even a single small act of self-respect—like speaking kindly to yourself—your brain releases dopamine, the “reward” chemical that makes you feel good. Repetition strengthens the neural pathways involved in this behavior (thanks to neuroplasticity), so your brain gradually links self-respect with safety and reward. This boosts confidence *and* reduces the brain’s tendency to default to self-criticism. In other words, small, consistent moments of self-kindness literally rewire your brain to be more resilient, confident, and compassionate toward yourself.

Ten ways to be kinder to yourself

Positive self-talk → Replace “I’m so stupid” with “I’m learning.” This reduces cortisol (stress hormone) and increases dopamine.

Micro-compliments → Each morning, say one kind thing to yourself. It activates your brain’s reward system.

Pause and breathe → A 2-minute breathing break signals safety to your nervous system, calming the amygdala.

Set tiny boundaries → Say “no” to one thing that drains you. Respecting limits strengthens self-worth circuits in the brain.

R&R → Stretch, hydrate, or rest without guilt. It’s self-care, not laziness.

Gratitude notes → Write one thing you appreciate about yourself daily. This builds new positive neural connections.

Gentle self-correction → When you mess up, talk to yourself like you would to a friend. This activates the prefrontal cortex instead of the threat system.

Celebrate small wins → Finished a task? Smile and acknowledge it. Dopamine spikes with recognition, not just achievement.

Visual reminders → Place affirmations or calming images where you can see them; visual cues trigger faster emotional regulation.

Spark Joy → Do one small thing daily that sparks joy (listening to music, savoring tea). Tiny pleasures rewire your reward system toward positivity.