



BE YOUR OWN *valentine* (NO CHOCOLATE REQUIRED)

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February often brings conversations about love—who we’re connected to, how we show up in relationships, and whether we feel “chosen” or “enough.” However, what’s often missing in these conversations is the relationship we have with ourselves, especially in moments of struggle. While romantic love is celebrated in abundance this time of year, many people still experience an internal dialogue shaped by pressure and criticism, and the belief that they should be further along by now or doing more.

Self-compassion offers a healthier alternative to that internal narrative. Instead of reacting to pain with judgment or urgency, self-compassion encourages us to treat ourselves with care, honesty, and understanding. This practice is not about being self-indulgent or avoiding responsibility. It’s a research-supported skill that helps regulate emotions, reduce shame, and build resilience. During a season that focuses so much on connection with others, self-compassion reminds us to consider one of the most important relationships we will ever have: the relationship we have with ourselves.

Self-compassion doesn’t look the same for everyone, and that’s okay. While we’re often quick to show kindness and compassion to others, it can be surprisingly difficult to extend that same care to ourselves. That’s why a helpful starting point during challenging moments is to pause and ask, “What would I say to a good friend or loved one

in this situation?” Chances are, you’d be much kinder to others than you are to yourself. Practicing self-compassion can also be as simple as adding a little mindfulness to your daily routine or using positive affirmations. When looking for ways to incorporate self-compassion into your life, it’s important to find what feels authentic to you. With so many self-love ideas out there, the goal isn’t to do them all, but to choose the ones that resonate and feel worth returning to.

Self-compassion is not a grand gesture or a declaration of self-love. It is practiced quietly in the way we speak to ourselves after a hard day, in our willingness to acknowledge our pain and feel things without immediately comparing, and in the choice to respond to difficulty with care rather than punishment. These moments may feel small, but they shape how safe we feel within ourselves.

As February invites reflection on love and connection, self-compassion reminds us that we are not required to earn kindness through perfection or strength. When we meet our struggles with understanding, we create a steadier foundation for growth, healing, and honest connection with others. In a culture that often pushes us to be harder on ourselves, self-compassion offers a different message: **you are already worthy of care, especially from yourself.**