Advanced Self-Compassion for ADHD Women

A Workbook for Cultivating Kindness & Resilience

Introduction

Welcome! This workbook is designed to help you deepen your self-compassion practice. Self-judgment, perfectionism, and internalized shame are all things ADHD women struggle with—but self-compassion can be a powerful antidote.

You'll explore:

- How **neuroplasticity** makes self-compassion a skill you can strengthen.
- Why **backdraft** (emotional resistance) happens and how to move through it.
- Practical **exercises** like grounding techniques, soothing touch, and self-compassion breaks.

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Part 1: The Science of Self-Compassion & ADHD

Why Self-Compassion is Hard for ADHD Women

Many ADHD women **struggle with self-compassion** but it's a great skill to learn.

Emotional Intensity & Dysregulation

You can feel emotions **deeply** and can get stuck in shame spirals.

Rejection Sensitivity

You're used to feeling **not good enough** and may criticize yourself before others can.

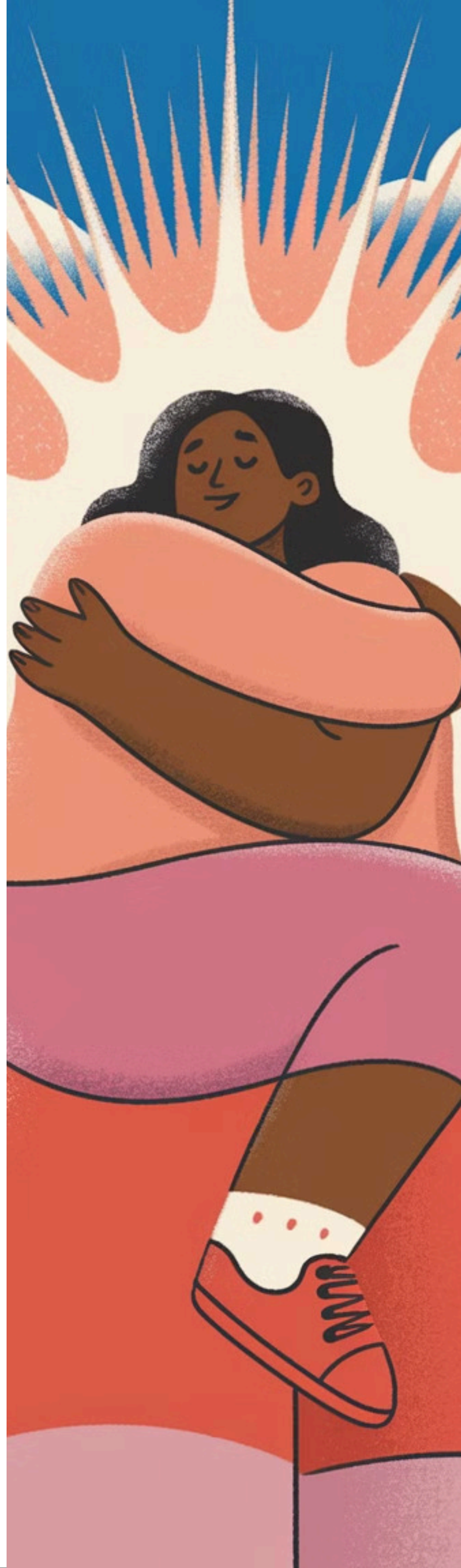
Time Blindness

You may forget to check in with yourself, leading to **burnout and emotional overload**.

Perfectionism & Black-and-White Thinking

If you're not **perfect**, you may assume you're **failing**.

The truth? Your brain can rewire to be more loving towards yourself with practice!



Neural Plasticity: Rewiring Your Brain for Self-Compassion

Neuroplasticity means your brain can change. The more you practice self-compassion, the easier it becomes. Over time, this practice can:

1

Strengthen Neural Pathways

Self-compassion reinforces brain circuits related to emotional regulation and kindness.

2

Create New Pathways

Your brain builds fresh connections that make self-compassion more automatic.

3

Increase Efficiency

Through myelination, your brain speeds up and strengthens these compassionate responses.

Reflection:

- How do you normally respond to mistakes or struggles?

What might change if self-compassion was your *default* response?

Part 2: Understanding & Managing Backdraft

What is Backdraft?

When you first practice self-compassion, difficult emotions can arise—this is called **backdraft**. It's the emotional resistance that happens when your brain isn't used to kindness.

Signs of Backdraft:

- **Emotional Surge** – Guilt, shame, grief, or anger surface.
- **Physical Sensations** – Chest tightness, throat constriction.
- **Intrusive Thoughts** – Old memories, self-criticism, or self-doubt appear.

How to Manage Backdraft

Instead of avoiding it, recognize it as **part of the process**. Try these steps:

- ▢ **Acknowledge It** – Label it: "This is backdraft."
- ▢ **Validate the Emotion** – Name what you're feeling without judgment.
- ▢ **Locate the Sensation** – Where in your body do you feel it?
- ▢ **Use Soothing Touch** – Place a hand on your heart or another comforting spot.
- ▢ **Redirect Attention** – Shift focus to something neutral or soothing.

Reflection:

- What emotions or resistance come up for you when you practice self-compassion?

- What's one small way you can remind yourself that this reaction is *normal*?

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Part 3: Practical Self-Compassion Tools

Grounding with a Mindfulness Object ("Here & Now" Stone)

This exercise helps you **stay present** and **self-soothe** using a small object.

Steps:

1. **Choose an Object** – A stone, shell, crystal, or small trinket.
2. **Engage with It** – Feel its texture, weight, and temperature.
3. **Use It for Grounding** – Hold it when you feel overwhelmed to bring yourself back to the present.
4. **Make It a Habit** – Keep it with you and use it as a check-in:

- [ ] How do I feel?
- [ ] What do I need?
- [ ] What can I do?

Reflection:

- Where will you keep your object so it's easy to reach?

- _Try using it daily for a week—how does it help?

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Part 4. Soothing Touch: Using Your Body to Calm Your Mind

Many ADHD women have a **complicated** relationship with physical self-soothing. We may have learned to suppress movement or stim behaviors. Reconnecting with touch can be healing.

Exercise:

1. Take a deep breath.
2. Place your hand over your heart and feel its warmth.
3. Try different soothing touches:

- [ ] One hand on your cheek
- [ ] Hugging your arms
- [ ] Gentle stroking of your skin
- [ ] A warm hand on your stomach

Reflection:

- How do different touches feel? Which one is most comforting?

- What memories, if any, come up when offering yourself this care?

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Part 5. Self-Compassion Break (Daily Micro-Practice)

A quick, ADHD-friendly way to reset when stress hits.

Steps:

1. **Notice the Distress** – Say, "This is hard."
2. **Common Humanity** – Remind yourself: "I'm not alone in this."
3. **Offer Compassion** – Place a hand on your heart, breathe deeply, and say, "May I be kind to myself."

Make it ADHD-Friendly:

- [ ] Write it on a sticky note.
- [ ] Set a phone reminder.
- [ ] Say it out loud when you feel self-critical.

Reflection:

- Where will you put a reminder for your self-compassion break?

- When is a time in your day you can practice this?



Compassionate Friend Visualization

Many ADHD women struggle with **self-criticism**, often speaking to themselves in ways they would never speak to a friend. This exercise helps you **build a kinder inner voice** by imagining a compassionate friend who always supports you.



Step 1: Imagine Your Compassionate Friend

- Close your eyes for a moment and **picture someone who embodies kindness and wisdom**. This could be:
  - A real person (a mentor, friend, or loved one)
  - A fictional character (a kind teacher, a wise elder, even a favorite book/movie character)
  - A completely imaginary person who is loving and non-judgmental or even a pet

Step 2: Hear Their Words

Now, imagine a specific thing **you're struggling with something**—maybe a mistake, a tough day, or a moment of self-doubt.

Your compassionate friend sits beside you and gently speaks.

How does their presence make you feel?

What tone do they use? *(Warm, gentle, understanding?)*

- Write down two **kind, supportive phrases** your compassionate friend would say to you about what's happened or is happening:

Step 3: Become Your Own Compassionate Friend

Catch Self-Criticism

When you notice self-critical thoughts, pause and ask yourself: *What would my compassionate friend say to me right now?*

1

Be Your Own Friend

Practice speaking to yourself with the same kindness your compassionate friend would use. Remember: This supportive voice is already within you—it just needs practice to grow stronger.

2

Daily Practice

Take 30 seconds each day to check in with your compassionate friend and hear their kind words. Over time, this voice will become your natural response.

3



Part 4: Creating Your Personal Self-Compassion Plan

You now have a **toolbox** of self-compassion techniques. Let's make sure you actually use them.

> My Personal Self-Compassion Plan:

- **When I notice self-criticism, I will...** *(e.g., place a hand on my heart, use a mantra, take a self-compassion break)*
- _____
  _____
  _____
- **My go-to grounding tool is...** *(Mindfulness object, soothing touch, breathing exercise?)*
- _____
  _____
  _____
- **A reminder to practice self-compassion: I will...** *(Post a sticky note, set a phone reminder, use a bracelet as a cue?)*
- _____
  _____
  _____
  _____
- One small way I will be kinder to myself this week is...
  _____
  _____
  _____



Final Thoughts: You Are Worthy of Your Own Kindness

Self-compassion isn't a luxury—it's a **lifeline**. ADHD can make life feel chaotic, but your **inner voice** doesn't have to add to the noise. With practice, self-kindness can become second nature.

Self-Compassion Toolkit

Mindfulness Object

Hold a small object for grounding and mindfulness.

Soothing Touch

Hand over heart, or anywhere it feels good.

Self-Compassion Break

"This is hard. I'm not alone. May I be kind to myself."

Compassionate Friend

What would they say to you?