Soothing rhythm breathing

A slower, deeper breathing rhythm that settles the body.

This is the foundation for the other compassion practices. The aim is to slow down enough for your body to feel steadier and safer. You do not need to relax completely.

1. Sit upright and comfortable, feet on the floor, shoulders back and down. Chest open.
2. Let your face soften. Try a slight, friendly half-smile.
3. Breathe a little more slowly and deeply than usual. Find a rhythm that feels soothing to you: perhaps in for 4 or 5, out for 4 or 5.
4. Let the breath be smooth and even. Feel it move down into your belly.
5. Notice your body slowing down. Feel the weight of your body held by the chair.
6. When your mind wanders, which it will, gently bring it back. No telling off.
7. If you like, on each out-breath say to yourself, in a warm inner voice, "slowing down" or "mind slowing, body slowing".
8. Carry on for two to five minutes.

Tips

- Short and often works best. Try a minute, several times a day.
- Practise when things are fine, so it is there when they are not.
- If focusing on the breath makes you anxious, focus on your feet on the floor or an object in your hand instead.

Day	When I practised	What I noticed
Mon		
Tue		
Wed		
Thu		
Fri		
Sat		
Sun		

From Compassion Focused Therapy, developed by Paul Gilbert.

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Imagining my compassionate self

An imagery exercise for practising being wise, strong and kind towards yourself.

Actors step into a character by imagining how that person thinks, stands and speaks. You can do the same with your own compassionate side. It does not matter whether you feel compassionate. You are practising, as you would a skill.

1. Begin with a minute of soothing rhythm breathing.
2. Imagine you are a deeply compassionate person. Bring to mind three qualities:

- **Wisdom.** You understand that life is hard, that we did not choose our brains or our past, and that everyone is doing their best with what they have.
- **Strength.** You are steady and grounded, like a mountain or a deep-rooted tree. You can face difficult things.
- **Caring commitment.** You want to help, yourself and others, and not to condemn.

3. Sit as this person would sit. Let your face take on their expression.
4. Imagine their voice: warm, slow, steady.
5. From here, look at the part of you that is struggling. What do you see? What do you want for that part?

Wisdom	Strength	Caring
What does my compassionate self understand?	How does it stand, sit and breathe?	What does it want for me?

What its voice sounds like, and what it says to me

A situation this week where I could bring this part of me in

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