

BE GOOD TO YOURSELF

If that title sounds familiar it's because it's the title of a hit song from the band Journey. You remember — the 80s band that also brought you *Don't Stop Believin'*. It might seem corny at first blush but it's a good message.

Most of us are much too hard on ourselves and we suffer because of it. We tend to focus on that part of our physique that we don't like or on that aspect of our personality that we wish were different. We tend to have a kind of negativity bias — especially when it comes to the judgements that we hand down on ourselves.

We magnify our weaknesses and minimize our strengths.

This sort of negativity bias may have had some evolutionary benefit. Being worried about threats to survival probably helped our ancestors be ready for them should they arise. Back in the day being too nonchalant might have gotten you killed. Unfortunately we're left with this innate propensity for negativity when it's really not much help.

So — as Steve Perry advises — let's be good to ourselves. Let's show ourselves some compassion.

Self compassion isn't self pity. It's a feeling of warmth, concern and good-wishes. It's a more emotional feeling than self-esteem and for that reason it's more powerful for reducing the impact of difficult conditions and for building resiliency.

So how can we develop more compassion for ourselves?

I'm glad you asked — here are some suggestions:

1. Recall being with someone who really cares about you and loves you. This helps activate the brain and gets it ready to give compassion.
2. Think about someone for whom you feel a great deal of compassion and then work on extending this same compassion to yourself. Try to remember to give yourself the benefit of the doubt. Extend yourself concern and good wishes.
3. Put your palm on your cheek or over your heart with tenderness as if comforting a hurt child. Say a short phrase in your mind like: "May I have happiness" or "May this difficult moment pass."
4. Let a feeling of being soothed and cared for sink in.