Self-Compassion Phrases

When you're feeling stress or emotional pain—perhaps you are caught in a traffic jam, are arguing with a loved one, or are feeling inadequate in some way—it’s helpful to have a set of phrases memorized to help you remember to be more compassionate to yourself in the moment. You can take a deep breath, put your hand over your heart, or gently hug yourself (if you feel comfortable doing so), and repeat the following phrases:

This is a moment of suffering
Suffering is a part of life
Other people suffer like this too
May I give myself the compassion I need

These phrases capture the essence of the three components of self-compassion. The first phrase helps to mindfully open to the sting of emotional pain. (You can also just say “this is really hard right now” or “this hurts.”) The second phrase reminds us that suffering unites all living beings and reduces the tendency to feel ashamed and isolated when things go wrong in our lives. The third phrase begins the process of responding with self-kindness rather than self-criticism. The final phrase reinforces the idea that you both need and deserve compassion in difficult moments. Be experimental with the phrases. Other phrases that may feel more authentic in a given situation are “May I accept myself as I am,” “May I forgive myself,” or “May I learn to accept what I cannot change.”