

## **Self-Compassion vs. Self-Destruction**

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We live in the most in-debt, obese, addicted, and medicated adult cohort in history, according to researcher Brene Brown. We can easily find a multitude of ways – Facebook, sugar, pornography, alcohol, etc. - to numb our vulnerability.

Vulnerability is a scary thing and many of us were taught at a young age that our feelings surrounding our experiences are wrong, shameful, silly, something “big boys/girls” don’t do, and will get us hurt, rejected, punished, or something else. Through abuse, trauma, neglect, and rejection we get the message that we are less than, unworthy, not valuable, or some other lie.

These messages lead to a sense of self-loathing. Depending on a person’s experience it can be anywhere from minimal to defining. It can manifest more or less during different periods of a person’s life. We can be more or less in control over our self-concept and choices depending on how much healing we’ve done, how many loving, accepting people we have in our lives, what self-care skills we’ve developed, and other protective and healing factors.

When these deep questions and doubts about worth are activated it’s not uncommon for us to medicate it away, even by using destructive means. Eating disorders, self-mutilation, alcohol and drug abuse, and other harmful choices allow individuals to, strangely enough, cope with the pain of self-hatred through numbing, distraction, soothing, and as a means of communication when words don’t suffice.

So how do we stop? How do we heal? The process begins by acknowledging our pain, accept our intrinsic value given to us by God, and finding safe people to heal with. The more we face our pain and counter the lies, the freer from shame and numbness we become. We can have the abundant life that Jesus promises. Learning new, healthy, caring ways of self-soothing to replace the self-destructive ways gives us new choices.

Our God loves us mightily and sees us as worthy beyond measure. When we accept his view of us, through work in the depths of our souls, we can be compassionate with ourselves, and this allows us to be more compassionate with others, too.

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