Self-Compassion During the Holidays: Being on Your Own Side

Choose a situation

Think about the upcoming holidays. Perhaps a gathering feels stressful, someone may criticize you, you're worried about food, you're grieving, or you'll be alone. Choose one situation that feels manageable to consider today. Take a breath and notice what comes up.

NOTICE

Name the emotion without criticizing yourself for having it. What emotion are you experiencing? Anxiety? Sadness? Anger? Shame? Loneliness? Name it without judging it. Instead of “I'm ridiculous for getting upset,” try “I'm noticing sadness and disappointment.” “This is anxiety.” “I'm feeling lonely.” “This is a difficult moment.” If judgment appears, notice it and return to the feeling.

VALIDATE

Acknowledge why this response is understandable. Consider why you might feel this way. Perhaps you've been hurt, want connection, are protecting your recovery, or miss someone. Say silently: “Given what I've experienced, it makes sense that this is difficult.” Validation does not mean that every interpretation is accurate, but every emotion comes from somewhere and provides important information.

SUPPORT

Imagine someone you care about facing this situation. What would you want them to know? Offer yourself that support. “I don't have to make everyone happy.” “I can reach out.” “If I struggle with food, I can respond with care rather than shame.”

One next action

Ask yourself: “What is one kind and effective thing I could do for myself in this situation?” It might be a boundary, a call, a walk, a meeting, rest, or permission to feel what you feel. Notice your answer.