



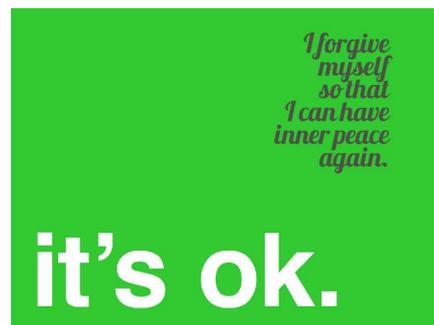
Last fortnight, I mentioned the importance of being **gentle** with ourselves when we find our self in default mode. No doubt, most (if not all of us) have been guilty of being our own worse critic. Consequently, mindfulness teaches us that if we can cultivate an attitude of curiosity with learning more about how our mind and body sometimes reacts, we are then able to rewire our brains to respond differently to how we may have responded in the past.

Think for a moment when you catch yourself falling into the trap of acting like you are in a fight or flight mode. Likewise, any circumstances which cause yourself to pump out anxiety unnecessarily. How helpful is it to yourself, personally, if you 'beat yourself up' about how you negatively responded? If, on the other hand, you were able to take a curious approach at the time with how your mind and body responded, how might such an attitude improve learning invaluable lessons with how to be able to hopefully avoid such negative responses in the future?



The reality is many of us are excellent with others when they make mistakes or are frightened or fearful, but we still forget to let go of negative thinking and fearful thoughts for ourselves. Remember, to always talk to yourself as you would your best friend. Would you tell someone you loved or cared about: you are really dumb; you will fail this just like last time and the time before; you are absolutely useless. Why then do we sometimes talk to ourselves like this? It makes no sense not to treat ourselves with loving kindness.

Often, we are self-critical with good intentions, For instance, for the overall purpose of never making that same mistake again. We may have unintentionally hurt someone, or failed to complete a task successfully. Research clearly demonstrates, however, that those that refrain from self-criticism and are self-compassionate with themselves as a result of a poor result in an exam, for example, perform better when they are retested. Consequently, to respond more appropriately in the future, we owe it to ourselves to be our own very best friend. Not only will we find that we will be more measured with our responses, but we will no doubt also improve our odds of maintaining a more positive mindset.



Obviously, there will be occasions that, despite no conscious intent on our part, we really do make a very serious mistake. Such actions can, at the time, make it difficult to pick ourselves up again off the canvas. Importantly, we do need to eventually (over time) forgive ourselves so we can return to our inner peace again. Mindfulness teaches us that during these very difficult times, we need to be supportive of our self as we would support our best friend if they were in this predicament. If we continue to remain in negative thoughts patterns of self-pity, being unfairly critical and judgmental of ourselves.....such behavior is only detrimental to ourselves.

As a part of common humanity, we do need to often remind ourselves that we are not the only one in the world that makes mistakes. Every one of us makes mistakes. Consequently, it is important that we all remember to always be non-judgmental; learn invaluable lessons from our mistakes; always talk to ourselves with self-kindness (as we would our best friends) and be very gentle with ourselves in a loving way. The result will be an improvement with how we react to difficult and uncomfortable situations in the future.