

Behavior

What did you do? What actions did you take?

What Does Your Compassionate Self Say?

Think about your wise, kind, confident, and compassionate mind that you connected with in the compassionate-self exercise. What would it think or say? How would your compassionate self approach this situation?

What Would Your Compassionate Self Have Done?

If it were in control, how would your compassionate self behave in this situation?

Outcome

How did it turn out? What helped in the situation? What did you do that worked? What got in the way of handling the situation the best you could?

The idea of the anger monitoring form is to have a structured way of examining how anger plays out in our lives. If we use the form, we can begin to see patterns in the situations that trigger our anger and in how we respond. This can help us anticipate and plan for how we will deal with similar situations in the future. The form also prompts us to use our compassionate minds to come up with alternatives to our habitual responses to anger, which we'll be looking at in the rest of this chapter. I've included a blank monitoring form later, as well as an example drawn from Sheila's work on her own anger.

Sample Anger Monitoring Form: Sheila's Example

The purpose of this form is to help you become familiar with the situations that tend to provoke your anger and the ways you tend to respond. It also aims to help you generate compassionate alternatives. Pick one time during the week when you experienced anger, rage, or irritation.

Situation/Trigger: Phone call from Joshua. He told me he was changing his major yet again, this time to art.

Emotions: Anger and worry. I also felt hopeless and inadequate as a parent, like it's my fault that he can't get his act together.

Thoughts: Well, that adds another year of college. He's never going to get a decent job! Why can't he just stop screwing around and get to work? This is my fault. My parents would never have put up with this.

Behaviors (What did you do?): I snapped at him and told him that I was getting sick of it and that he needed to get his act together. I also told him there weren't any good jobs for artists.

What does your compassionate self say? He isn't doing this just to frustrate me. He's trying to figure out his life. Josh is a grown man who can make his own choices. I don't have to agree with all of his choices to love and support him.

What would your compassionate self do? Call him back and apologize. Assertively express my concerns in a way that doesn't attack him. Work with my own emotions so that I can accept his decisions.

Outcome: I ended up calling him back and apologizing. I'm still struggling with his decision, but I'm not as angry.