

this, imagine yourself as a young child who is feeling the same pain as you. If you wanted to be kind to this child, to provide support or comfort, and to show that you truly care, then what kind words might you say? Whatever words spring to mind, try saying something similar to yourself, with that same attitude of care and concern and kindness. You can even go a step further with this idea and turn it into a powerful imaginary exercise, as follows:

Compassion For The Younger You

Find a comfortable position and close your eyes or stare at a spot.

Take a few slow, deep breaths and notice them with openness and curiosity.

You are about to do an exercise in imagination. Some people imagine with vivid, colourful pictures, much like those on a TV screen; others imagine with vague, fuzzy, unclear pictures; while others imagine without using pictures at all, relying more on words and ideas.

However you imagine is just fine.

Now imagine yourself getting into a time machine. Once inside that machine, you travel back in time to visit yourself as a young child. Visit this child at some point in their life when they are in a lot of pain, immediately after some distressing childhood event.

Now step out of the time machine and make contact with the younger you. Take a good look at this young child and get a sense of what he is going through. Is she crying? Is he angry or frightened? Does she feel guilty or ashamed? What does this child really need: love,

kindness, understanding, forgiveness, nurturing or acceptance? In a kind, calm and gentle voice, tell this ‘younger you’ that you know what just happened, that you know what he’s been through; that you know how much she is hurting.

Tell this child that he doesn’t need anyone else to validate that experience because YOU know.

Tell this child that she survived the experience and it is now just a painful memory.

Tell this child that you are here, that you know how much it hurts and you want to help in any way you can.

Ask this child if there’s anything she needs or wants from you — and whatever she asks for, give it to her. If this child asks you to take him somewhere special, go ahead and do it. Offer a hug, a kiss, words of kindness, or a gift of some sort. This is an exercise in imagination, so you can give anything she wants. If this younger you doesn’t know what he wants, or doesn’t trust you, then let him know that’s fine; that you are here for support, and will always be there to do whatever you can to help.

Tell this child that you are here, that you care, and that you are going to help her recover from this pain to go on to lead a full, rich and valued life.

Continue to radiate caring and kindness towards this younger you, in any way you can think of through words, gestures or deeds.

Once you have a sense that this younger you has accepted your caring and kindness, let her be and bring awareness to your breathing.