



“Dear past me, know that you are deserving of compassion and care”: Exploring the self-compassionate writings of adolescent girls managing weight-related threats in physical activity

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Adolescent girls often face weight-stigmatizing experiences in physical activity contexts. Self-compassion inductions may be useful in mitigating the harmful psychological consequences of these events. Self-compassionate writing inductions are easy to administer, cost-effective, and have demonstrated effectiveness in acutely increasing self-compassion scores in adolescents. However, it is unclear *how* adolescent girls apply the components of self-compassion to weight-related threats, and if these applications align with theoretical conceptualizations of self-compassion.



The present qualitative study examined the written entries of a self-compassionate writing task completed by adolescent girls ($n = 104$) in response to a negative weight-related experience that occurred in the context of physical activity.

Using deductive content analysis, written entries were compared against a coding structure that was informed by theoretical conceptualizations of self-compassion (e.g. self-kindness, common humanity, mindfulness).



73% of written entries were in alignment with conceptual tenets of self-kindness.

“You were so young, dealing with so many tough things. You were forced to be mature and thankful for your circumstances and that was unfair. No adult should have the right to put down another child for their weight. [...] I want you to know that I hear you I want you to know that it isn’t your fault and that nobody should have to apologize for their body.”



75% of written entries were in alignment with conceptual tenets of common humanity.

“When I heard that this happened to her, I was able to automatically relate, it was like an instant click and she didn't need to explain anything else such as how she felt or whatsoever, I understood completely.”



72% of written entries were in alignment with conceptual tenets of mindfulness.

“I understand that this event triggered this response from me and that any emotions I felt were and still are valid in relation to this event. I do not judge myself for how I reacted to this situation and accept the way I felt on this day.”

Common challenges with applying self-compassion included demonstrating care towards the self in response to distress, empathizing with the experience of others, and overidentification. It is possible that challenges with applying self-compassion are exacerbated by culturally endorsed beliefs surrounding weight.

These findings can inform the development and optimization of future self-direction self-compassion inductions for adolescents in response to weight-specific threats and may have utility in broader applications of self-compassionate writing interventions.