

# Letting Go of Our Self-Definitions by Identifying Our Interconnectedness: Self Compassion

Think about a trait that you often judge yourself for, and that is an important part of your self-definition. For example, you may think of yourself as a shy person, lazy, angry, and so on.

Then ask yourself the following questions:

1. How often do you display this trait—most of the time, sometimes, only occasionally?
  - Who are you when you don't display the trait?
  - Are you still you?
2. Are there particular circumstances that seem to draw out the trait, and others in which the trait is not apparent?
  - Does this trait really define you if particular circumstances must be present in order for the trait to emerge?
3. What are the various causes and conditions that led to having the trait in the first place (early family experiences, genetics, life pressures, etc.)?
  - If these "outside" forces were partly responsible for you having this trait, is it accurate to think of the trait as reflecting the inner you?
4. Did you choose to have this trait, and do you have much choice about whether or not you display this trait?
  - If not, why are you judging yourself for this trait?
5. What happens when you reframe your self-description so that you are not defining yourself in terms of the trait?
  - For example, instead of saying "I am an angry person," what happens when you say "Sometimes, in certain circumstances, I get angry."

By not identifying so strongly with this trait, does anything change? Can you sense any more space, freedom, peace of mind?