SOUTHERN COOS HOSPITAL & HEALTH CENTER

QUALITY SYSTEM CERTIFICATION DNV ISO 9001

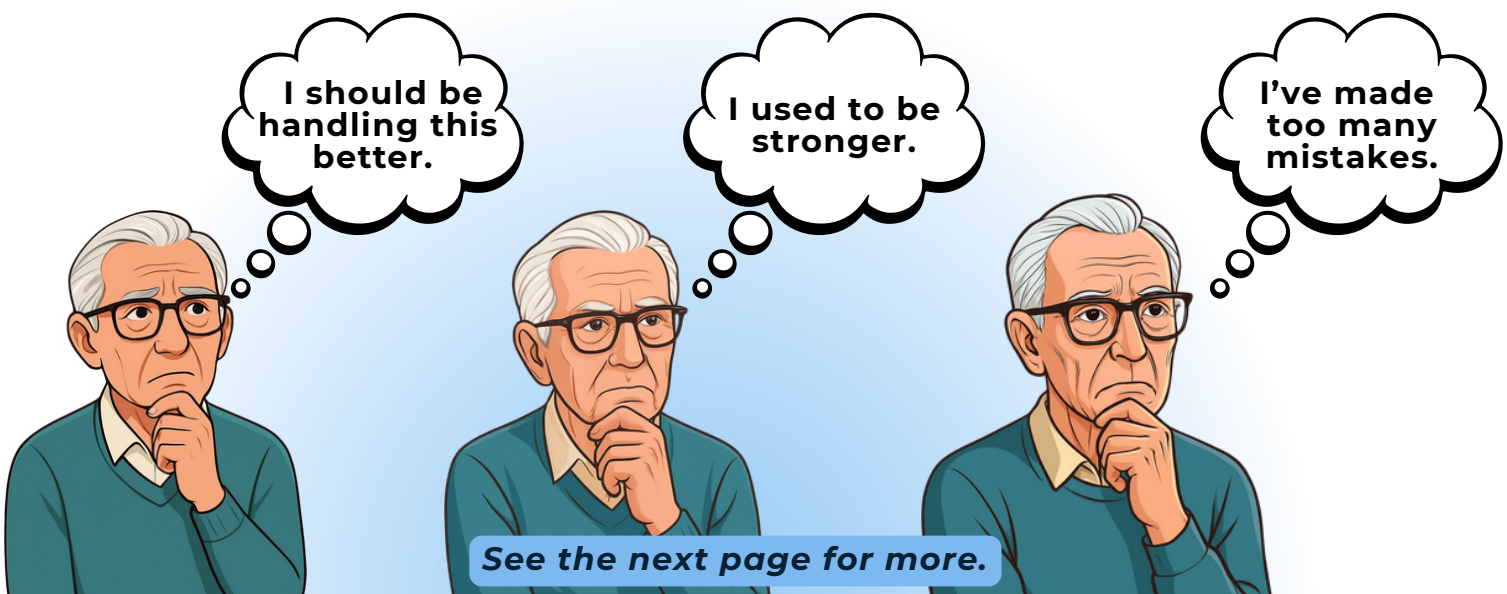
Senior Life Solutions®

LEARNING TO BE KINDER TO YOURSELF LATER IN LIFE



As life changes with age, many people find that their expectations of themselves do not always change along with it. You may still expect the same energy, independence, or resilience you had years ago, even as your circumstances shift.

When those expectations are not met, it is easy for self-criticism to take hold. It can sound like this:



See the next page for more.

Thoughts like “I should be able to handle this” or “I don’t want to be a burden” often come from a lifetime of responsibility and care for others. While those values are meaningful, they can also make it harder to extend that same care inward.

It may seem that learning to be kinder to yourself is about lowering standards or ignoring challenges, but it’s really all about responding to yourself with the same patience and understanding you would offer someone you care about.

Noticing How You Speak to Yourself

One of the first steps in building self-compassion is becoming more aware of your inner voice. Many people are surprised to notice how critical that voice can be. You may find yourself judging your limitations, comparing yourself to the past, or minimizing your own needs.

It can be helpful to pause and ask a simple question: Would I speak this way to a friend or a family member? If the answer is no, it may be time for a change in mindset.

Making Small Changes To Your Inner Dialogue

Changing long-standing thought patterns takes time, but small adjustments are possible at first.

For example, if you catch yourself thinking, “I can’t do what I used to,” you might gently reframe that thought to, “I’m adjusting to some changes, and that takes time.” If you find yourself thinking, “I shouldn’t need help,” you might instead remind yourself, “Everyone needs support from time to time.”

These shifts allow you to speak to yourself in a way that acknowledges difficulty without adding unnecessary judgment.

Letting Go of Unrealistic Expectations

Many older adults have spent decades being dependable, capable, and self-sufficient. Those qualities are strengths, but they can also lead to expectations that are difficult to maintain over time.

Being kinder to yourself may involve reassessing what is reasonable for you right now. That might include pacing yourself differently, asking for help, or allowing more time for rest. Adjusting these expectations of yourself can be a way to take responsibility, and doing so reflects an ability to adapt, which is a form of resilience in itself.

Accepting Support Without Guilt

One of the most difficult adjustments later in life is accepting help. Whether it comes from family, friends, or healthcare providers, support can feel uncomfortable if you are used to being the one others rely on.

Caregivers and family members often want to help, but they also benefit from open communication and shared understanding. In many cases, support works best when it is approached as a partnership. Accepting care allows others to show up for you, just as you may have done for them in the past.

WE CAN HELP.

Our hospital-based outpatient program is designed to meet the unique needs of older adults experiencing depression and/or anxiety related to life changes that are often associated with aging or a chronic diagnosis. Anyone can make a referral to our program, including self-referrals, provider referrals, or community consultations.

Call us today at (541) 329-1032