

How to Build Capacity?

So

What is compassion?

Compassion Focused Therapy: and Social Mentality Theory

Caring/Help
Giving



Care/Help Seeking/
Receiving

Specific Competencies
e.g., attention empathy

Specific Competencies
e.g., openness responsive

Facilitators vs Inhibitors

Facilitators vs Inhibitors

Not just interested in what compassion is – but how it is experienced as a recipient – experienced as “being cared about”

Compassion Evolved From The Care Giving Social Mentality



Other Views of Compassion

Definitions stretch back to Buddhism and Aristotle: suffering as non-trivial; non-deserved, and one can have empathy

McKay & Fanning (1992)

understanding, acceptance and forgiveness

Neff (2003)

Kindness-warmth
Common humanity
Mindfulness-Non-judgemental

Gilbert (1989, 2000, 2005)

A mental orientation that combines various, care focused qualities of mind and is dependent on those qualities

Compassion

Buddhist Monk Geshe Thupten Jinpa developed compassion cultivation training, for which there is growing evidence (Jazaieri, et al., 2012), defined compassion as a multidimensional process comprised of four key components:

- (1) an awareness of suffering (cognitive/empathic awareness),
- (2) sympathetic concern related to being emotionally moved by suffering (affective component),
- (3) a wish to see the relief of that suffering (intention),
- (4) a responsiveness or readiness to help relieve that suffering (motivational)

The Two Psychologies of Compassion

Compassion can be defined in many ways:
As a sensitivity to the suffering of self and others with a deep commitment to try to relieve and prevent it

Two different Psychologies

- To approach, understand and (how to) engage with suffering
- To work to alleviate and prevent suffering - nurturing

Each more complex than it might at first seem

Caring

- Concern for the other – distress and need sensitive
- Wish for others to be free from suffering
- Interest in the welfare of others – happy together – affect matching – some self-interest shared happiness builds supportive relationships
- The motive and wish for others to grow and flourish –

Psychology of Caring-Nurturance

Fogel, Melson and Mistry work (1986) define the core elements of care-nurturance as: "... the provision of guidance, protection and care for the purpose of fostering developmental change congruent with the expected potential for change of the object of nurturance" (p.55).

They suggest that nurturance involves:

- Awareness of the need to be nurturing,
- Motivation to nurture,
- Understanding what is needed to be nurturing
- Expression of nurturing feelings, with an ability to match nurturing with the
- Feedback from the impact on the other

Caring- Helping

- Begins in childhood – children take an interest in caring for others –e.g., get support if distressed – helping
- Helping others overcome blocks to their goals
- Practice - as in play with dolls/toys -siblings
- Have a preference to play with caring toy
- Requires empathy and mentalising

Helping

- Attuning to other people's goals and working towards helping them achieve them
- Altruistic helping is helping at the possible expense to oneself
- Requires empathy and mentalising
- Begins in early childhood

The Competencies of Compassion

Engagement and Alleviation

Sources of Compassion

Sympathy and empathy

If you burn or cut your skin the *anterior cingulate* lights up in your brain. But if you see this happening to 'another' the same part lights up – we represent others feeling states inside us – can be changed according to who they are (friend vs enemy)

Positive affect associated with helping: Children enjoy helping (see video)

Compassion and Thinking Mind

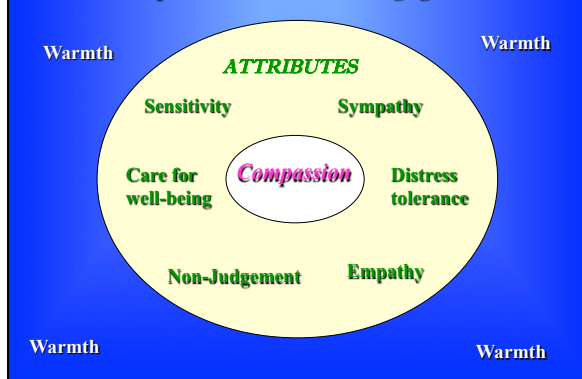
* Caring now under the influence of powerful cognitive and reflective processes for insight and systematic understanding –

* Reciprocal feedback between cognition and motivations

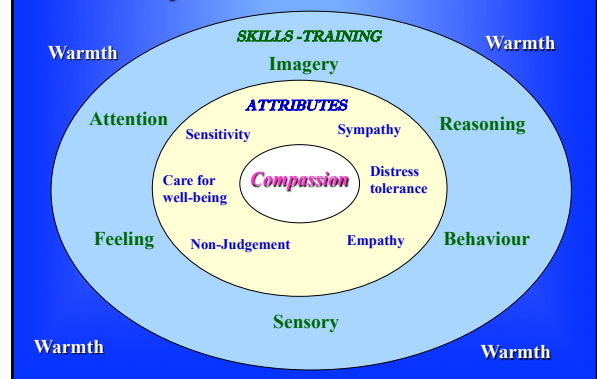
* Crucial importance of frontal cortex and its sensitivity to disruption



Compassionate Mind - Engagement



Compassionate Mind - Alleviation



What do we need to feel compassion?



What blocks compassion?



Empathic Bridging



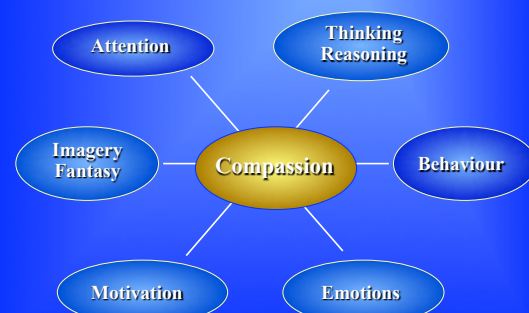
Threatened mind can block compassion



Competitive mind can block Compassion

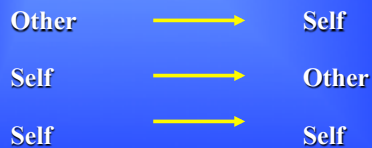


Compassionate mind/mentality



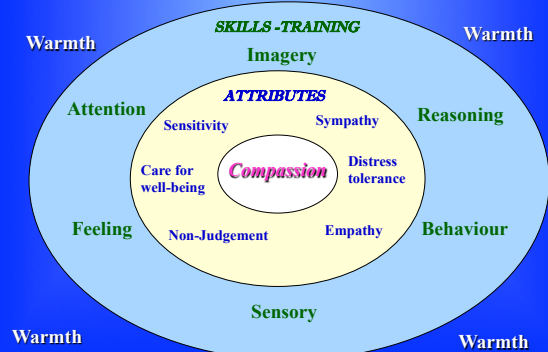
Compassion as Flow

Different practices for each



Evidence that *intentionally* practicing each of these can have impacts on mental states and social behaviour

Compassionate Mind - Alleviation



For CFT

The psychology of seeking/receiving care/help is as important as the psychology of giving

Compassion Solutions

Ancient wisdom: Compassion is the road to happiness (Buddhism)

Evolution: Evolution has made our brains highly sensitive to external and internal kindness

Neuroscience: Specific brain areas are focused on detecting and responding to kindness and compassion

Social and developmental Psychology: History of affiliation affects brain maturation, emotion regulation, pro-social behaviour and sense of self

Being *cared for* and Physiology

The evolution of caring brings major changes in physiological regulation –
Relationships are physiological regulators

Gene expression
Stress reactivity
Immune system function
Frontal cortex
Illness and recovery
Core values
Self-identities
Compassion and empathy

Core to the Story

We are at our most flourishing in terms of frontal cortex, immune system, stress system, cardiovascular systems and emotions when:

1. We experience and feel we are cared about, wanted and valued
2. When we are caring, helping and valuing

CFT reaches for the self that wants to be wanted, belong and care about *plus* be caring supporting and helpful

Compassion Focused Therapy: A Social Mentality

Caring/Helping
Giving

Care/Help Seeking/
Receiving

Specific Competencies
e.g., attention empathy

Specific Competencies
e.g., openness responsive

Facilitators vs Inhibitors

Facilitators vs Inhibitors

Self and others
Self and self



120 Million year evolving systems to regulate threat
Social relationships are the most important sources of meaning, self regulation and learning

Exercises and Imagery Session

Compassion Cultivations

- Build Capacity
- Compassion has to do 'work'
- Body work – breathing
- Mindfulness
- Posture
- Focusing the mind

Understanding Attention

- Attention can be moved
- Attention is like a spotlight that enhances – zooms in
- Attention can pull on physiological process

Point of consciousness – Only now do we exist. Concept of consciousness as empty

Water may carry a poison or medicine but water is not a poison or medicine

Aspects of Mindfulness

- Attention as movable – direct-able
- Attention as zoom-lens like
- Attention as a chosen activity and focused
- Attention pulls on physiological systems
- Attention as outward and/or inwardly directed
- Attention as opening/expanding or narrowing 'consciousness'
- Attention as focused and maintained
- Meta-cognitive processing of monitoring
- Remembering to wake-up to the present moment each moment

Preparing for Imagery

Mindfulness

“Mindfulness is the awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose in the present moment, and non-judgmentally, to the unfolding of experience moment by moment”, Jon Kabat-Zinn

Intrusions of thoughts and feelings – normalise and teach 'with kindness to just return the attention'

Key Imagery Tasks

- Soothing breathing rhythm
- Safe 'welcoming' place
- Compassion colour
- Compassionate self
- Compassionate other/image
- Building and strengthening the compassionate mind as building capacity

Soothing Breathing Rhythm

Offer the 'unstable stance vs the stable' demonstration and contextualise as find and inner centre – a point of stability

- Deepening and slowing the breath – 5-6 breaths per minute
- Focus on out-breath and sensation of slowing
- Bring attention to body feeling slightly heavier
- Feeling of groundedness –solidness
- Finding the point of inner stillness (not the same as relaxation!)

Demonstrate value of facial expression - 15 sec neutral 15 second smile

Soothing Rhythm breathing combines posture and body focusing

Imagery

- Explain the nature of imagery
- Focus on sensory details

Safe Place Imagery

Explain that imagery is fleeting - offering glimpses and fragments - it is the 'intention' (first) and then feelings that are important

The focus on feeling safe and soothed in a place (also to feel 'joyful' if the person finds that helpful)

Focus on all the senses

Imagine the place is pleased/happy to see you and you have a sense of welcome and belonging

Safe Place Imagery

Are they alone?

What happened if they allow people in

Which people would be okay and why

What does that say

Compassion Colour

Colours may change or be varied

Light, mist or fog

Sole intention is to heal and help you

These exercises can help create sense of safeness space and start the process of becoming open to compassion flowing in

Imagining the Compassionate Other

Explain point of Compassionate-other imagery work

Inner helper, inner guide, access to self-soothing system through relating (no different in principle to activating any other system e.g. sexual – these systems were designed for social interactions – social mentality theory)

Now for a moment, focus on your breathing and try to feel soothing rhythm. Look down or close your eyes and imagine your image of your compassionate **ideal** 'other' caring other for you.

Useful specific questions: would they be old or young, male or female, colour of their eyes, tall or short – more than one

Developing Compassion Images

Ideal caring and compassionate self and/or image --- define ideal as everything you would want, need

- **Wisdom** a sentient mind who understands the struggles of humanity and self. Empathic stance, self-transcendent
- **Strength** as 'calm authority' fortitude, endurance, complete benevolence
- **Caring** as a genuine desire for one's well-being – Commitment and motivation

Other-Focused Compassion

Act of creating one (what one would like for oneself) is a step on compassion focusing

Find the type of image and form of relationship that fits for the person – images usually change

This can be an Inner: Nurturer, Guide, Friend, Mentor, Fellow Traveller; Bodhisattva, Ideal Compassionate Other

Exercise: to focus on, write about, paint - create image or 'sense of' ideal compassionate other'. Notice feelings and thoughts arising during the exercise. Mindful approach

Imagery

Non-verbal Communication

- Compassionate facial expression – smile
- Compassionate voice – tone, form and pace
- Compassionate posture (e.g. can change depending on the actions)
- Sense of appearance, and colour (e.g. clothes)

Sensory qualities help form image

Compassionate self

Meta Cognition

- The ability to 'stand back' and think about one's own feelings and thoughts as if from an external position
- To have empathic insight and judgement (cyclists) – own position or that of others
- Compassionate meta-cognition – wisdom
- Compassionate self is the ideal empathic position

Compassion and Bodhicitta

Geshe Tashi Tsering speaks about the meaning of *Bodhicitta* in the following way:

Bodhicitta is the essence of all of Buddhist practise. The word *bodhicitta* itself explains so much: *bodhi* is Sanskrit for "awake," or "awakening" and *chitta* for "mind." As enlightenment is the state of being fully awakened, the precious mind of *bodhicitta* is the mind that is starting to become completely awakened in order to benefit all other beings. There are two aspects to this mind: the aspiration to benefit others and the wish to obtain complete enlightenment in order to do that most skillfully." (p.1)

Geshe Tashi Tsering. (2008). *The Awakening Mind: the Foundation of Buddhist Thought Volume 4*. London: Wisdom publications

Creating a compassionate self

- Mixture of imagery meditation and method acting techniques –cultivating a particular version of ourselves – the seed of compassion within.
- ‘The Method’. The Method trains actors to use their imagination, senses and emotions to conceive of characters with unique and original behaviour, creating performances grounded in the human truth of the moment. (<http://www.methodactingstrasberg.com/methodacting>)

The unique qualities of the compassionate self

- Wisdom – this is the wisdom of insight experience and practice –wisdom grows
- Authority and power in the sense of confidence to perform - practice
- Motivational focus: one’s inner intent; to support, encourage, validate, sooth, help

Compassionate and self-image goals were assessed with 13 items. All items began with the phrase, “In the past week, in the area of friendships, how much did you want to or try to,” and items were rated on a scale ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*always*)

Seven items assessed compassionate goals, namely, “be supportive of others”, “have compassion for others’ mistakes and weaknesses”, “avoid doing anything that would be harmful to others”, “make a positive difference in someone else’s life”, “be constructive in your comments to others”, “avoid being selfish or self-centered”, and “avoid doing things that aren’t helpful to me or others”

Six items assessed self-image goals, namely, “get others to recognize or acknowledge your positive qualities”, “convince others that you are right”, “avoid showing your weaknesses”, “avoid the possibility of being wrong”, “avoid being rejected by others”, and “avoid taking risks or making mistakes”

Crocker, J. & Canevello, A. (2008). Creating and undermining social support in communal relationships: The role of compassionate and self-image goals. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol 95(3), Sept. 555-575

Findings (N 199)

Average compassionate goals predicted closeness, clear and connected feelings, and increased social support and trust over the semester; self-image goals attenuated these effects

Average self-image goals predicted conflict, loneliness, and afraid and confused feelings; compassionate goals attenuated these effects

People with compassionate goals create a supportive environment for themselves and others, but only if they do not have high self-image goals

Crocker, J. & Canevello, A. (2008). Creating and undermining social support in communal relationships: The role of compassionate and self-image goals. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol 95(3), Sept. 555-575

Other-Focused from the Compassionate Self

Sit comfortably in chair with soothing breathing rhythm. Work on getting into the compassion self. Now imagine focusing on the ‘desire for somebody you love to be happy and at peace’. (This can later extend outwards to eventually all sentient beings). Use the mantra on the out breath “May you find peace; may you be happy”

Have a focus start work on the *joy* if this could be true

Explore people’s experience - reflection/meditation and fears, blocks and resistances

Self-Focused from the Compassionate Self

Sit comfortably in chair with soothing breathing rhythm. Work on getting into the compassion self. Now imagine focusing on your own desire to be happy Use the mantra on the out breath “May I find peace; may I be happy” Sometimes it helps to use your name

Have a focus on the *joy* - if this could be true

Explore people’s experience - reflection/meditation and fears, blocks and resistances

Resistance to self Compassion

Notice it is as more difficult to direct compassion than to a loved one

Normalise

Imagine the inner resistance – then “May that which resists compassion in me find peace - non-resistance to resistance

Self-Focused from the Compassionate Self or others ‘Selves’

The basic process can be used for any aspect of self – because in compassion focused therapy we see the inner self like a social mentality – a set of relationships.

If working with the angry self, anxious self or critical self then focus is on “May that which is causing you to be angry, anxious or critical – cease and may you find peace” Drop happiness, though, because that can mean different things in this context.

Focus on how the soothing affiliative system can come to the aid of the threat system and their intensities and conflicts.

Imagining the self-compassionate part of self - Assuming a role

Learn to practice each day: Remind oneself of the self one would like to be or become today –*train* to become the self one wants to be

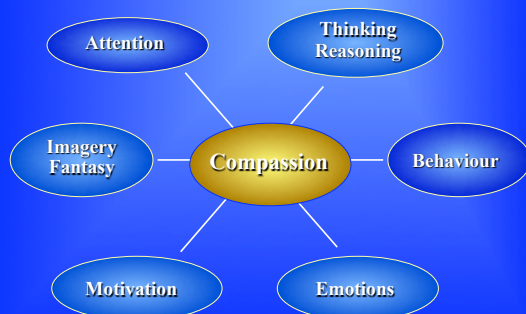
Compassionate walking, breathing, voice tones, facial expression, thoughts, clothes – compassion behaviour

If angry or anxious – notice and refocus – back to principle propose of ‘to be happy and free from suffering and help others be happy and free from suffering’

Compassionate behaviour

- Random acts of kindness (no matter how small)
- Focus on one act that needs to be tackled (challenging but not over whelming) –
- Developing compassionate courage –do different
- Focus on things that have ‘fitted’ with Compassionate self today

Compassionate mind/mentality



Compassion Process



Key CFT Messages

1. Clear understanding of the evolutionary approach
2. Clear understand of therapist's basic orientation to problems and to de-pathologise
3. Clear understanding of concept of 'not our fault' but our responsibility (past vs future)
4. Clear understanding of the need to train our minds in order to take responsibility
5. Clear understanding of the three circle model and the importance of affiliation as an affect regulator -out of the red into the green
6. Clear understanding of the importance of mental conflicts (motive, emotions and strategies)
7. The two psychologies of compassion as containers for courageous work