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Barbara Kohlenberg

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Russell Kolts

Relevant Financial Relationships:

- faculty Eastern Washington University
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# Therapy with Our Hearts Wide Open: Love and Compassion in FAP and CFT

Barbara Kohlenberg, Ph.D.

Russell Kolts, Ph.D.



# The Big Picture: Where CFT and FAP like to be:

“For one human being to love another: that is perhaps the most difficult of our tasks; the ultimate, the last test and proof, the work for which all other work is but preparation.”

- Rainer Maria Rilke



# This kind of impact

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VA-SXCGwLvY>
- Compassion in the moment vs teaching/experiential compassion discussion/exercises.
- Why did this touch linger for 40 years?
  - FAP thoughts
  - CFT thoughts

# Converging Truths - Loving Relationships are Important

- Relationships → Happiness
- Connection → Wellbeing
- Loneliness is the new smoking!
- Spiritual Sensibilities

# And...Love isn't easy

- Adam and Eve
  - The First Love Story, 2018, Bruce Feiler
- Disruptions to love of others
  - Divorce, loneliness, clinical dx, the stuff of cultural fascination
- Disruptions to love of self
  - Efforts to "not have" and to "not be" what and who we are



# Objectives

1. Describe the importance of therapeutic love and compassion in helping clients engage deeply and meaningfully with their struggles and suffering in crafting healthy lives.
2. List examples of therapist behaviors that communicate therapeutic love and compassion in FAP and CFT.
3. Explain how the therapy relationship can mirror the behaviors involved in starting, maintaining, and ending meaningful, loving relationships.

# Therapeutic love and compassion

The heart of both CFT and FAP

- Behavior change occurs in contexts of caring, loving, nurturing interactions.
- Both treatments are focused on creating opportunities for clients to achieve their dreams, to learn to love, play, and work in ways that are meaningful and effective. Both treatments value treating the client with respect, dignity, kindness.
- Compassion: Caring “with pain”, sometimes the work can be painful, always linked to helping clients achieve what they cherish...connection facilitates courage.

# Therapeutic love and compassion

- And...there are differences in focus with respect to these issues.
- CFT: Procedures/exercises/theory on how to cultivate compassion for self and for others.
  - In and out of session practice of compassion for out of session targets.
- FAP: Focused on observing and creating real emotional experiences in session, where teaching through experience can occur.
  - In session feelings and opportunities for both in session and out of session targets. No prescribed practice exercises.
- CFT/FAP Happy (better?) together!
  - No research yet!

# Who we are:

- BK...ACT/FAP person...(some of my history....), completely taken with the theory and practice of CFT, and noticed perhaps some opportunities missed from an in-session, FAP standpoint...Such as teaching compassion to help clients with therapy opportunities...love, ending, therapist mistakes...
- RK...CFT person...recent work focused on facilitating therapist training in CFT; believes a major “growth-edge” for CFT involves increased focus on the therapeutic relationship so that compassion is modeled and embodied in real time by the therapist...blown away at the ability of FAP to do just this in a gritty, real, non-contrived way.

# How to communicate love and compassion in Functional Analytic Psychotherapy (FAP)

- NOT the idea that “you have to have a good therapeutic relationship in order to then teach about love and compassion.”
- The idea that what goes on in session actually IS where therapeutic opportunity is found.
  - Anxiety, love, longing, disappointment, anger, boredom, fear...about the therapist and the therapeutic relationship.
  - Therapist vacations, errors, therapy ending, paying for treatment, therapist illness, wishing for friendship/romance....

# FAP--Greben quote

If I look back on those patients whom I have seen change a great deal, I know that the heat was in the therapeutic relationship.....There was struggle and fear and **closeness and love and terror**. There was intimacy and outrage, concern and humiliation...It was a journey of importance, more to the patient who had come seeking help, but in fact to both participants. It was a process which carried on throughout the course of therapy and left both patient and therapist altered by the experience...The therapeutic relationship is at the absolute heart of psychotherapy, and is the vehicle whereby therapeutic change occurs. (Greben, 1981, pp. 453-454).

# FAP in a nutshell

- Clinically Relevant Behaviors
  - CRB that occurs in session
  - CRB1—problem
  - CRB2—improvement
- Mechanism of change—Therapists natural, contingent responding to decrease CRB1's and to increase CRB2's.
- Built from basic behavior analytic principles.
- ACT inspired the birth of FAP (short story here)

# FAP- What is it?

- Developed out of awareness of the huge impact that relationships have in our lives.
- Applied behavior analysis to try to make sense of this.



# Behavior Analysis:

The time-space relationship

Reinforcement is always more effective when delivered right after the behavior of interest.

Example: Reinforcing a client for expressing an important emotion right after it occurs, not several sessions later.

# FAP's 5 rules

1. Watch for CRBs (awareness)
2. Evoke CRBs (courage)
3. Reinforce CRBs (love)
4. Observe your effect on your client (awareness)
5. Generalize (behaviorism)

# Compassion in CFT

In CFT, compassion is seen as involving 3 flows:

- Self-to-Other
- Other-to-Self
- Self-to-Self
- Increase compassionate responding (CRB2), decrease condemning (CRB1)

# Compassion in CFT

How do therapists facilitate the cultivation of compassion in CFT?

- **Support it** – through providing a therapeutic environment of relational safeness.
- **Model it** – through the therapist's behavior and interactions with the client.
- **Shape it** – through the reinforcement of successive approximations.
- **Train it** – through the use of specific compassion practices.

# Layers of CFT

1. The therapeutic relationship
2. Compassionate realizations leading to compassionate understanding
3. Mindful awareness
4. Compassion practices/compassion-infused therapeutic work
  - Organized around the cultivation of the compassionate self

# The Therapeutic Relationship in CFT

- Secure attachment Figure
- Teacher/Facilitator of compassionate realizations
- Model of compassion – compassionate self

# Compassionate Realizations & Understandings

- Life involves pain, discomfort, & suffering.
- We (and our brains, emotions, and basic motives) were shaped by evolution in tricky ways:
  - 3 Circles/systems model of emotion
  - Problematic old-brain/new-brain interactions
- We are shaped by social forces that we neither choose nor design.

So many of the causes and conditions that result in our suffering were not designed or chosen by us, and our not our fault. However, if we want to have happy lives and good relationships, we must take responsibility for working with them.

# Three circles/systems model of Emotion

- Threat
- Drive
- Safeness/soothing
- Threat narrowly focuses attention/thinking.
- Safeness
  - Associated with broad, flexible attention, creative thinking, compassion, prosociality – and so getting this system “online” is a goal of therapy
  - Tends to be socially mediated in humans.
  - We are designed by evolution to feel safe via experiences of affiliation (loving connection) with others.
  - Thawing the frozen shrimp.



# Starting, maintaining and ending therapeutic relationships

This can mirror starting, maintaining and ending any loving, important, relationship.

## ○ **Beginning**

- Opportunities as early as the FAP or CFT raps or consent to treatments.
- Do our clients express what they need? Can they disagree? Can we be compassionate/create space which doesn't need to compromise about client objections/unhappiness?
- How are they starting with us, does this mirror how they start other relationships? Overly open, overly trusting, overly cautious?

## ○ **Maintaining**

- Trust, working with conflict, addressing longing for more closeness/love, regretting boundaries...
- Therapy behaviors that interfere/promote treatment?

## ○ **Ending**

- Saying goodbye, longing for more, avoiding goodbyes

# Practice: Client says:

- “I had an erotic dream about you...”
- “I am in love with you”
- “Can’t we stop therapy so we can start being friends/lovers?”
- ”I am so sad therapy is almost over...”
- “You only care about me because you’re being paid.”
  
- *Existential issues played out in therapy!*

# Practice: Your client says to you:

- "I hate my job...I hate when people tell me what to do, I get so angry..."
- "I am so lonely...I have many friends but no one who actually knows me or loves me..."
- "I really don't believe in therapy, it has never helped. I am only here for my partner, who will leave me if I don't come."
- "That suggestion we worked up last time totally bombed. You are not helping me..."
- "I said I did not want to talk about my father...yet here we are...you suck."
- "I am so worried about your health...you don't look well...are you ok?"
- *Opportunities for in-vivo work*

# Practice: CFT examples with FAP added

In CFT:

T: I'll be talking about evolution...I wanted to know your views...

C: (Stiffening a bit) I don't believe in evolution. I believe that God created humans just as we are.

T. Good...I won't challenge or try to change your beliefs...

C: Good because that never works.

T: I respect your beliefs...and I will still talk about things from a scientific perspective, can you accept that we have brains and minds that sometimes work in tricky ways?

C: That's not hard to accept...

T: If our differences get in the way, I hope you let me know, we can explore it together and to work with it, what I don't want is for you to be uncomfortable or unhappy with the therapy and for me to be clueless about it

C: Sounds good....

# CFT and collaboration, lovely...

And...is a CRB1 evoked and then missed?

**T:** “So we have some disagreements that are pretty fundamental. Is this kind of divide something that happens in your life?”

**C:** “Yes...I have pretty much lost my relationship with my son because he rejects my faith and how he was raised, he is one of these science types now...It is a huge loss for me...He, like you, says “I respect you” but it is just BS because he really doesn’t and really he doesn’t even know me.”

(CRB1 or 2? CFT moves consistent with promoting a 2?)

# CFT examples with FAP added:

## The Ideal Compassionate Image Practice

- Focused on helping self-critical clients to learn to self soothe and develop feelings of being accepted and cared for, by imagining an ideal figure who understands them, has compassion for them, and extends kindness, support, and encouragement.
- Asking for an out of therapy image, which sometimes is imagined and sometimes is not or pain emerges due to the lack of such an experience.
- Adding FAP:
  - Can the client accept compassion from the therapist? Even with associated pain, “you are getting paid for this...”
  - Can the exercise generate compassion “around” the pain, rather than finding another exercise which does not generate pain?

# Practice: FAP examples with CFT added

C: "I'm so down on myself...I no showed our last appointment, you are so much better than me, I always screw everything up..."

T: "This is familiar, is it not? Isn't this what happens with your husband, where you make a mistake and then just spiral down into self criticism...can you hear, right now, how that no-show actually made me feel about you?"

C: "I know that you will be kind...that makes me feel even worse..."

T: "I have an idea...would you be willing to try something new, "empty chair" technique?"

C: "I'll likely screw it up.."

T: "Let's try....Can you think of someone who you really love?"

C: "Yes, my brother..."

# Practice: FAP examples with CFT added

T: "Let's put him in that chair...look at him, let's imagine that he tells you how he no-showed his therapist...how would he feel, what would you say?"

C: "I'd tell him that I know how it feels, and how much I love him...."

T: "So you can give compassion to him, I wonder about growing that capacity in you...."

C: "Wow, I see your point...I really don't give myself a break..."

T: "I see your tears at being aware of this, you seem so tender and open right now, not closed and protected."

C: Thanks...I know what you mean. This helped me.



# For more....

- <https://functionalanalyticpsychotherapy.com>
- <https://compassionatemind.co.uk>
- <https://compassionatemind.net>

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