

Exercises and Imagery Session

Basic Design or Mind 1

- To survive - detect and respond to threats and secure resources for survival and reproduction
- Attention is constantly drawn into this 'programming'. Archetypes run the show
- The constant background of our being and mind
- Threat Processing is our 'factory setting'

Basic Design of Mind 2

- Threat emotions over-rule positive ones
- Rapid processing more focusing on threat detection (e.g. thalamic-amygdala)
- Threat/harm memories more powerful than the positive one
- Easy to acquire (some) fear and safety strategies

Compassion

- Training our minds
- Changing 'factory settings' and life's shaping
- Cultivation
- Building mindful compassionate qualities and capacities for the purpose of better balancing of the threat and drive systems

Preparing for Imagery

Preparing the body - breathing - find the rhythm of one's own soothing - not that long at first - minute or so - then longer. Called **Soothing Rhythm Breathing**

Body posture

Fear of engaging may need to switch to sensory focus (e.g. tennis ball)

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 that pulls on physiological systems
- Attention as outward and inwardly directed
- Attention as opening/expanding or narrowing ‘consciousness’
- Attention as focused and maintained
- Meta-cognitive processing of monitoring
- Remembering to wake 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

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 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 sense of welcome and belonging

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

Developing Compassion Images

- **Ideal** caring and compassionate self and/or image --- define ideal as everything you would want, need
- **Caring** as a genuine desire for one's well-being – Commitment and motivation
- **Wisdom** a sentient mind who understands the struggles of humanity and self. Empathic stance, self-transcendent
- **Strength** as 'calm authority' fortitude, endurance
- **Warmth** affiliation, genuine care, gentle smile, voice
- **Non-Judgement** as no criticism, curiosity – but motivation to be encouraging, supportive helpful

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 from image

Meta Cognition

- The ability to stand and thinking about one own feeling and thoughts as if for an external position
- To have empathic insight and judgement (cyclists) – own position or that o others
- Compassionate meta-cognition - wisdom

Self-focused Compassion

Sit comfortably in a chair with soothing rhythm breathing and imagine focusing on your ‘desire to be happy and free from suffering’

Explore people’s experience of that reflection/meditation

Explore the value of compassionate self or compassionate imagery in experiencing the desire within oneself ‘to be happy and free from suffering’

Explore blocks, fears and facilitators

Other-Focused Compassion

Sit comfortably in chair with soothing rhythm breathing. Work on getting into the compassion role. Now imagine focusing on 'desire for others to be happy and free from suffering'. (This can start off with people one knows and then extend outwards to eventually all sentient beings). Imagine facial expressions and voice tones

Explore people's experience - reflection/meditation

Explore the value of compassionate self or compassionate imagery in generating and feeling the desire within oneself for others 'to be happy and free from suffering'

Explore blocks, fears and facilitators

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 body rhythm. Can you look down or close your eyes and imagine your **ideal** caring other for you”

Or build for someone else - a child:

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

Other-Focused Compassion

Act of creating one (what one would like for one) 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

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

Compassionate walking, breathing, voice tones, facial expression, thoughts, clothes

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'

Key Message for Today

1. Clear understanding of the evolutionary approach
2. Clear understand of therapists basic orientation to problems and to de-pathologise
3. Clear understanding of concept of 'not our fault'
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