

COMPASSION FOCUSED THERAPY

What is Compassion?



- **Compassion:**
- **According to Martin Lowenthal, Compassion is a foundation for sharing our aliveness and building a more human world.**
- **Compassion gets a lot of attention in positive psychology.**
- **Compassion is considered as an essential quality shared by many people, and now it has its own therapy: Compassion Focused Therapy.**



Compassion

Compassion-focused therapy (CFT)

- (CFT) aims to help **promote mental and emotional healing** by encouraging people in treatment to be **compassionate toward themselves and other people**. Compassion, both toward the self and toward others, is an emotional response believed by many to be an essential aspect of well-being.

- Some main components of the approach are aspects of:

Cognitive behavioral therapy

Developmental psychology

Evolutionary psychology

Social psychology

Neuroscience

Buddhist philosophy.

ISSUES TREATED WITH CFT

can also be effective helping people manage distressing thoughts, behaviors, with feelings associated with self-attack.

Anxiety

Shame

Depression

Disordered eating

Anger

Self-injury

Psychosis

Ten Compassion Focused Therapy Exercises :

• **1. Soothing Rhythm Breathing.**

- To practice the soothing rhythm breathing exercise, first make sure that you are sitting comfortably with both feet flat on the floor. Rest your hands on top of your legs and close your eyes or look down at the floor. Let yourself have a gentle facial expression, like a small smile. Begin to focus on your breathing.
- Turn your attention to your body, sensing the weight of your body resting on the chair and the floor underneath you.
- When you're ready, slowly open your eyes and bring yourself back to the present moment. A small stretch and a deep breath can help you ready yourself for the rest of your day.

2. Simple Body Scan and Relaxation

- This exercise builds on top of the soothing rhythm breathing you just read about.
- Next, **focus on how your legs** feel. Imagine that all the tension in your legs is flowing down through your legs, into the floor, and away. Let the tension go. Imagine your legs feeling grateful that the tension is leaving.
- Focus on the **tips of your fingers** next. Imagine the tension stored there and allow it to be released, through your hands, your wrists, your arms, elbows, and shoulders, and finally all the way through your body to the floor.
- Next, **move on to the tension in your head, neck, and forehead**. Allow them to relax with each breath, and visualize the tension running down through your shoulders, your stomach and your back, all the way down through your legs and into the floor.
- Finally, **focus on your whole body**. Each time you breathe, focus on the word **“Relax.”** Imagine your body becoming a bit more relaxed with every breath. Practice this breath for a few minutes. Allow yourself to **be grateful for your body**, and for your body to be grateful for the **special attention and release it just received**.
- When you are ready, get up and go about your day feeling a bit more relax.

3. Creating a Safe Place

- Begin this exercise with soothing rhythm breathing. Create a sense of calmness, safety, and peace within yourself.
- Imagine looking around yourself. What can you see? **Your safe and peaceful place**
- Wherever this place is, focus on what you can feel In your safe place
- you may feel the **sun on your face**, a **breeze lifting your hair** or caressing your cheek or the heat of a campfire burning. You may **feel sand between your toes**



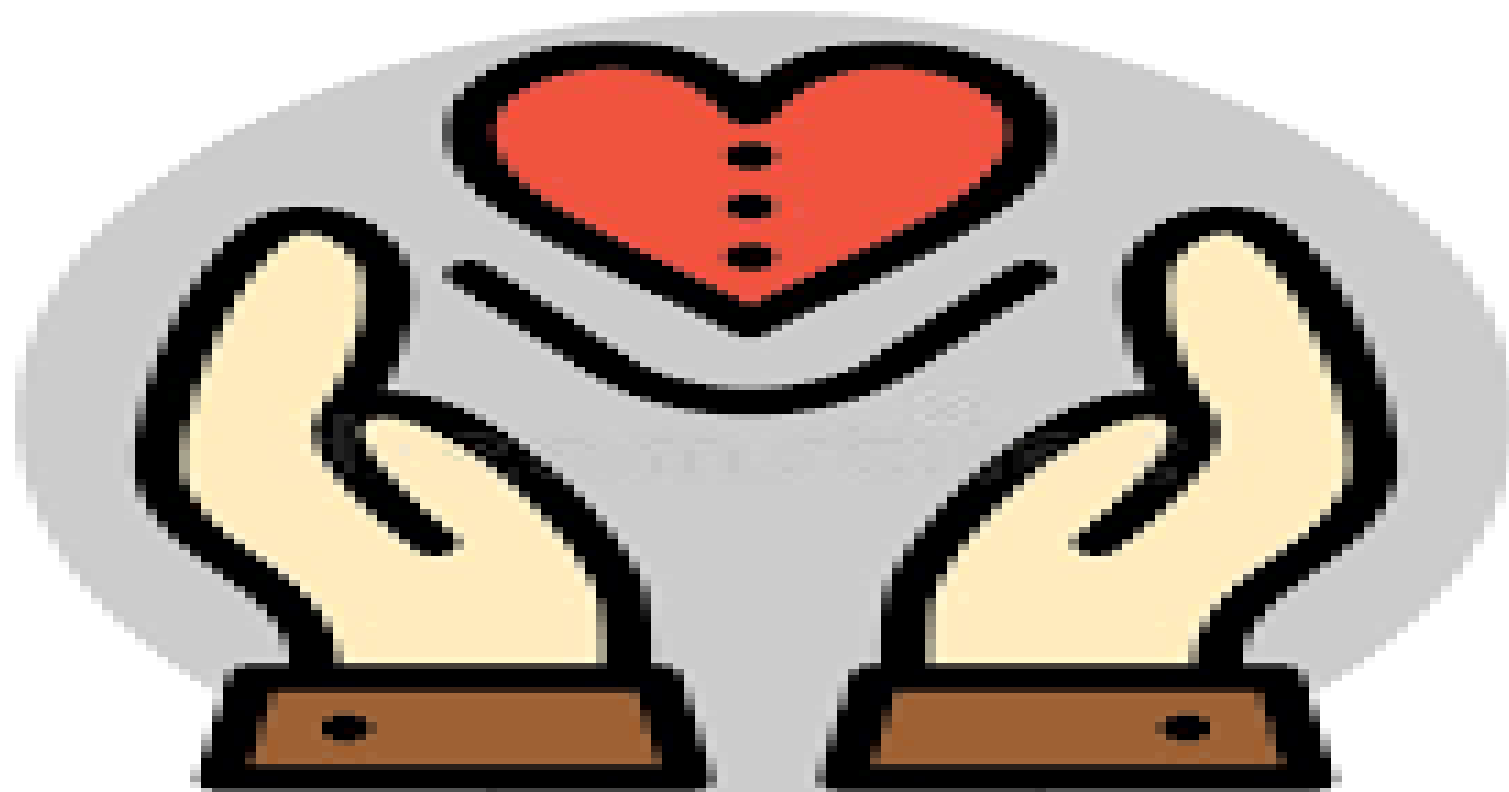
Continued safe place

- Next, think about what you can hear
- Now focus on what you can smell
- Allow your body to relax – your whole body, which includes your face. Let your face show your pleasure at being in the safe space.
- Finally, imagine that your safe place actually finds joy in your presence as well.

4. Compassionate Color

- Imagine this compassionate color surrounding you. Once it has surrounded you, imagine it entering through your chest, near your heart, and slowly spreading through every inch of your body.





focus on this color as one of wisdom, strength, warmth, and total kindness.

Create a facial expression to match the feelings of this color.

Allow yourself to feel supported and loved.

- **5. The Compassionate Self :**

- sense of self to develop, both for your compassion for others and for yourself.
- imagine that you are a deeply compassionate person. Think of all the qualities you would ideally have as that compassionate person.
- Focus on your desires to become a compassionate person and to be able to think, feel, and act compassionately.
- Imagine yourself with each of the qualities of compassion – wisdom, strength, warmth, and responsibility

- First, imagine yourself with a **wealth of wisdom**. This wisdom comes from your understanding about the nature of life, of our minds and bodies. Spend some time thinking about how much goes on inside of us which is not our fault.
- Next, imagine having a **compassionate strength**. Imagine yourself as a person that understands your own difficulties and those of others in a non-judgmental way, and the tolerance to withstand difficulties.
- Imagine, **warm and kind**, to yourself and to others. Imagine yourself speaking to someone kindly, and note the tone of your voice. Imagine reaching out to someone with warmth and feel what that might be like.

- Finally, imagine yourself with a **sense of responsibility**. Imagine that you have no interest in condemning or blaming others or yourself .
- only want to do the best you can to help yourself and others through a difficult situation.

6. Compassionate Flowing Out

- sit somewhere quiet where you won't be disturbed and begin to focus on your breathing. Think about a time when you felt very kind and caring towards a person or a beloved animal.
- Next, focus on the desire to help the person or animal, and the feelings of kindness that will guide you to help. Remember that in this exercise it is your intentions that are important, not how the person or animal responds.
- Bring to mind a specific time when you felt compassionate towards him or her. Imagine yourself expanding, as if you are becoming calmer, wise, stronger, and more responsible, and able to help him or her.

Pay attention to your body as you remember how it felt to be kind.

Spend some time expanding with warmth in your body.

Notice the genuine desire for this person to be free of suffering and to flourish.

Spend a minute or two thinking about the tone of your voice and the kinds of things you said, or the kinds of things you did or wanted to do to help.

Spend another minute or two on thinking about how good it felt to be kind to him or her.



Finally, focus only on your desire to be helpful and kind: the sense of warmth, feelings of expansion, your kind tone of voice, the wisdom in your voice and your behavior.

When you have finished this exercise, you may want to take some notes about how this felt for you.

~~FOCUSING THE
COMPASSIONATE SELF
ON OTHERS~~

This exercise also requires a quiet place where you won't be disturbed.

Try to create a sense of being a compassionate person, as you did in the previous two exercises.

Some days this will be easier than others, but hold on to even the slightest glimmer of feeling like a compassionate person.



- Next, think about someone you care about (e.g., a partner, friend, parent, child, or even a beloved animal). Focus on them and direct your attention towards them with three basic feelings and thoughts:
 - **May you be well**
 - **May you be happy**
 - **May you be free of suffering**
- Remember that it is your behavior and intentions that are important, rather than how he or she will react. Be gentle, take your time, and allow yourself to focus on the desires and wishes you create in yourself for this other being.

**Compassion Flowing
Into Oneself:
Using Memory**



remember
COMPASSION

8. Compassion Flowing Into Oneself: Using Memory

- Memory can be a great tool for provoking and practicing compassion. Begin with your soothing rhythm breathing and practice this for a minute or two.
- Once you feel that your body has slowed down a bit, prepare for the exercise by allowing your body posture and facial expression to become compassionate.
- Feel free to play around with postures and facial expressions, but whatever expression and posture you go with, they should be gentle.

- Once you are ready, think of a time when someone was kind to you. Like the previous exercise, you shouldn't think of a time when someone was kind to you because you were in distress; the point of this exercise is not to focus on your distress, but on the desire to be kind and to help others.
- Put on your compassionate expression and adopt the compassionate body posture you have cultivated as you remember the compassion you received. Recall how it felt to receive that kindness.

- While recalling the memory, focus on the important sensory qualities of your memory.

Try the following steps:

1. Focus on the kinds of things this person said, as well as the tone of their voice when they spoke. Spend one minute on this.
2. Next, focus on the feeling of the emotion in the person – what they really felt for you at that moment. Focus on that for another minute, if you can and would like to.
3. Finally, focus on the entire experience. Think about whether they touched you in a friendly or comforting way, or whether they helped you in some other way. Allow the experience of gratitude and joy in being helped to grow in you. Remember to keep your expression as compassionate as you can. Spend a few minutes in this step.

**FOCUSING THE
COMPASSIONATE SELF
ON YOURSELF**

9. Focusing the Compassionate Self on Yourself



**If your compassion
does not include
yourself, it is incomplete.**

~ Buddha

- This exercise can be focused on one of two different “selves.” You can do both if you wish, but focus on only one at a time.
- First, you can focus your compassion on your troubled self. It will help if you have completed the exercise in which you imagined yourself as a completely compassionate person, full of wisdom, strength, warmth, and responsibility.
- Imagine that you are watching a video of yourself like you’re watching a movie. You watch yourself get up in the morning, moving around your bedroom, and preparing yourself for the day. Be sure to keep your compassionate and kind position as you watch this “home movie.”
- Notice how the person you are watching is troubled by self-critical thoughts or feelings, and be in touch with their struggle – but don’t get dragged down into it. Keep your compassionate self forward, looking through the eyes of compassion and with the intention of being warm, kind, and helpful

- Next, imagine yourself in a situation where you become anxious. Remember to keep your compassionate position. Look at your anxious self through the eyes of your compassionate self and practice compassion for the person that you see. Understand and empathize with your anxious self, and extend compassion to him or her.
- Imagine how you might like to help that person, what you might want to say to help them deal with their anxiety. You might say something to validate their emotions, or you may say something encouraging to help them recognize their ability to pull through the anxiety. Whatever you say, make sure it's kind and helpful.

10. Creating a Compassionate Ideal



- This exercise will be helpful to complete the other exercises before moving on to this one, especially the initial exercise, the exercise in which you cultivate a compassionate expression, and the safe place exercise.
- Engage your soothing rhythm breath and adopt your compassionate expression. Recall your safe place, with all the sights, sounds, smells, and feelings that come with it. Remind yourself that this is your special place and that it delights in your presence. If you wish, this is a good place to create and “meet” your compassionate self.
- Create a compassionate vision of yourself. It may be created out of the mist in front of you, or it may snap into existence once you have the idea in mind. It may be walking toward you with a smile

Once you build a solid image of your compassionate self, think about the qualities that your compassionate image holds. These questions can help you build a good image:

- How would you like your ideal caring, compassionate image to look or appear?

Would you want your ideal compassionate image to feel/look/seem old or young; to be male or female (or non-human looking, e.g. an animal, sea or light)?

- How would you like your compassionate image to sound? What would be a compassionate voice tone for you?
- Are there any other sensory qualities that would come with your image, such as colors or sounds?
- How would you like your ideal compassionate image to relate to you? What would help you sense their commitment and kindness for you?
- How would you like to relate to your compassionate image?

- Remember that your compassionate image wants you to be free from suffering and to flourish. The compassionate self understands that we are all just doing the best we can, and it understands that the emotions that can pop up in our minds are not our fault.
- Experience what it is like to focus on the feeling that another being values and cares for you unconditionally. Focus on the idea that your compassionate self is looking at you with warmth and kindness, and imagine that they have the following desires for you:
 - That you be well
 - That you be happy
 - That you be free from suffering
- Practice this exercise as much as you need to tap into your compassionate self and surround both yourself and others with love, acceptance, and compassion.

LIMITATIONS OF COMPASSION FOCUSED THERAPY



- While CFT may be effective for those who are comfortable with the concept of being soothed or cared for, not all people share this disposition. Some individuals in treatment may be afraid of compassion, while others may feel they are not worthy of being treated compassionately. Some persons may even find it challenging to understand compassion itself.
- Issues may also arise when performing exercises involving mindfulness and compassionate imagery. Some people may find it difficult to enter a state of mindfulness, and failure may lead to self-criticism. Other people may be unable to focus on or even sense compassionate imagery. The use of images of known people or events may also bring to mind unwanted associations and negative past experiences. Treatment may be less effective with those who are experiencing intense anger or rage.

A white envelope is shown, partially open, with a vibrant red ribbon tied around it. The words "Thank You" are written in a black, elegant cursive font on the front of the envelope. The envelope is set against a plain white background, and the entire image is framed by a light green border.

Thank You