



THE UNIVERSITY
OF QUEENSLAND
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The Compassionate Mind Research Group
School of Psychology

Compassionate Mind Training Workbook



THE
Compassionate Mind
FOUNDATION



UNIVERSITY
of DERBY

Introduction

Welcome to this Compassion Mind Training seminar. For two weeks, you will learn to cultivate your compassionate self and experience the benefits of this practice in your daily life.

This workbook is divided into four parts.

In the first part, you will explore the concepts that are at the basis of the Compassionate Mind Training.

In the second part, there is some important information on Being a Parent.

In the third part, we describe some important aspects regarding the preparation for the practices.

In the fourth and last part, we present some exercises that comprise the Compassionate Mind Training.

Workbook Part I – An Introduction to Compassionate Mind Training

What is compassion?

Compassion is commonly defined as *“a sensitivity to suffering in self and others with a willingness to try to alleviate and prevented it”*. If you look carefully at this definition you will see there are two aspects to compassion. The first is the ability to notice and engage with things that are upsetting or distressing. The second is the ability to do things and learn and practice ways of being that are helpful both in the short term and the long term. Just like becoming physically fit, compassion involves understanding the relevant exercises needed (e.g. push-ups work your arms, chest, core, hips and legs) and then practicing them to obtain benefits (e.g. if you don’t actually engage with push-ups then you won’t observe any of the physical benefits!).

Some people misunderstand compassion and feel it’s about just being ‘kind’ or is soft or weak. Some even can feel that being compassionate with oneself is somewhat of a luxury or a bit of a self-indulgence. But actually compassion is a way of helping us have the courage to deal with the struggles we face in our lives. Think about this. Supposing you have something difficult to do like an exam you’re anxious about, or something worrying such having to go to hospital for some tests or perhaps even more painfully, going through a divorce/break-up. Most of us would rather avoid these things. Imagine a very compassionate friend helping you. How would they be with you? Well, listening, understanding and being supportive are important aspects, but also *encouraging* you to do the things you may not want to do is vital. For example, encouraging you to do that study for the exam or having that difficult conversation with a partner, are things we need to do. The one thing they wouldn’t do is to advise you to avoid things or just to make it easy on yourself. (For example, *“If it’s difficult to study for the exam, then maybe you shouldn’t do it? Maybe you should skip it”* are examples of advice you wouldn’t hear from a true friend). Your compassionate friend will try to support and help you in any way they can to give you *the courage* to face what you need to face (for example, *“I understand that it’s going to be hard and frustrating to study for that exam, but I know you can do it, and you really want to graduate and this will help you become what you’d like to be.”*)

So the first thing we learn about compassion is that compassion is not about weakness at all; indeed, when times are hard compassion can really help us get through them. So compassion means we are able to go face up to difficulties and genuinely work out how best to be helpful.

Understanding our mind

So why do we need compassion? The first reason for compassion is to recognise that the human brain has some wonderful things in it *but it is not that well designed*, and at times can be destructive, cruel and even naturally a bit crazy! This *is no one's fault* it is just way the brain has evolved.

To expand, about 2 million years ago our primate ancestor began to evolve all kinds of intelligent abilities - the so called 'new brain'. The consequences are that today we can reason, anticipate, imagine, use our languages and symbols, have a sense of ourselves as individuals – in ways that no other animal can do (to the best of our current knowledge). We can also self monitor – that is we can think about ourselves, what's going on in our bodies and in our mind. For example, you will never see a chimpanzee sitting under a tree trying to problem solve ways on how to lose a little bit of extra weight its put on over the holidays, or how to grow food for the winter, or how to build a better shelter than last year so that it has more bedrooms in case guests want to stay the night. However, tragically modern humans can put their intelligence into not so quite good things, like how to take advantage of others for their own personal interests, how to build weapons or how to exploit and cheat other people. Indeed, in German the word 'schadenfreude' means to take please in another's misfortune ...and something we do in Sport all of the time!

As humans, we additionally have the capacity to monitor how our body feels, our emotions, thoughts we are having, and we can make judgements about ourselves (that can be negative sometimes). Now you will never find chimpanzees ruminating about their health, or what they need to do if they have put on weight, or why they feel inferior, or what the future might hold for them, or what other chimpanzees might think about them, or criticising themselves for doing something they regret. The 'new brain' of humans means that we can think about these things for good or not so good. So we can recognise while our 'new brain' can be very helpful, unfortunately we can also put our new thinking brain to very destructive uses, harmful to oneself and others. Now this is an important insight because it helps us to see deeply into the causes of how our brains work, and it's the basis for starting to take responsibility for how our minds are.

Creating loops in the mind

Another reason why the human mind can cause us a lot of pain and suffering it's because we can hold things in mind that stimulate painful emotions. Imagine a zebra running away from a lion. Once it has got away and it can no longer smell, see or hear the lion it will calm down and go back to grazing with the herd. But if this was to happen to a human, then although they would feel relief at getting away, they could also start imagining and ruminating on what might have happened if they'd got caught. *'Imagine being eaten alive'! Imagine what might happen tomorrow if there are two lions...' So the human brain is capable of constantly imagining the worst and what "would happen if.... and suppose this or ... and suppose that ...".* By keeping these types of thoughts in our minds means that we can be in constant states of stress and worry and anxiety. Remember this is **not our fault** it's just the way the mind is unless we learn to notice what it's up to and shift our attention.

Importantly, modern science - including our own published research - demonstrates that humans can actually stimulate emotions and associated bodily responses (e.g. stress or calming hormones) by what they focus on and imagine. Thus, humans can actually stimulate emotions by what they focus on and imagine. If you lay in bed at night thinking about a holiday you're looking forward to, your body will respond with some excitement. If on the other hand you're ruminating about an argument that you have had then angry feelings will be stimulated. If you're worrying about something such as finances then anxiety will be in your body, and if you are fantasising about something a bit erotic, then you will have those feelings. So we have a brain that is quite different to other animals because we can stimulate our own emotions. However, we can also notice ourselves doing this and maybe choose to change what goes on in our minds – we call this process becoming **mindful**. Therefore, it's quite important to become aware of what we are stimulating in ourselves; what we are thinking about and paying attention to. Compassion training helps us do that, and in particular it helps us use our attention and thus stimulate our brains in ways that are very conducive to our well-being.

Compassion can therefore help us see that some of the causes of our suffering are to do with basic brain systems, which we didn't choose and don't want. However, once we see this and really recognise that the **human brain is actually very tricky** because of its evolved features, and can quite easily get tipped into anxiety, depression or even cruelty, compassion invites us to begin to train our brains in certain ways so that we are less likely to get tripped up by these problems with our brains. We are less likely to get overly caught up in excessive self-monitoring and self or other-criticising. We are more able to become aware of when our brains are doing

things that we may not, in the long-term, want them to do – such as holding us in angry states or anxious states.

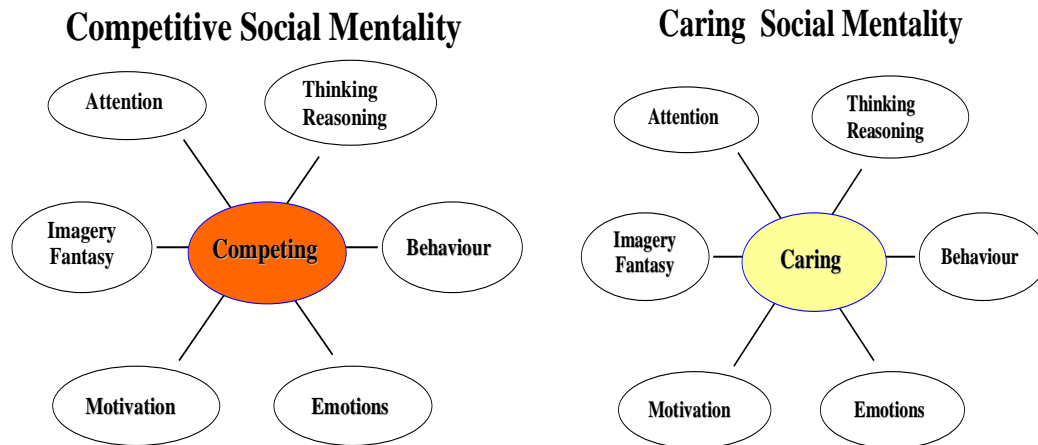
How our motives and goals can organise and control our minds and bodies

So evolution has given us a whole range of motives which at times can be in conflict with each other. And our basic motivations and goals in life shape our sense of self and the way our brains and bodies work. So imagine a person who is completely motivated to get on in the world, make as much money as she or he can regardless of other people, and really is only interested in his or her own needs and wishes. What does this person tend to pay attention to and focus their minds on? How do they think about things and situations? What do they value in life and what gives them meaning? What excites them and what threatens them? How do they actually 'nurture' themselves? How do they see other people? How do they behave towards other people? How do you think other people see that type of individual and want to relate to them?

Can you see that this person's motivation in life – how they want to be – is going to organise a lot of what goes on in their minds and bodies, how they act in the world and how the world will act towards them?

We might contrast this with a person who is much more compassion focused. They take genuine interest in their well-being, and that of others, and enjoy sharing and working together, helping others where they can. What does this person pay attention to and focus their minds on? How do they think about things and situations? What do they value in life and what gives them meaning? What excites them and what threatens them? How do they actually 'nurture' themselves? How do they see other people? How do they behave towards other people? How do you think other people see that type of individual and want to relate to them?

Once again note how their motivation is going to organise a lot of what goes on in their minds and bodies quite differently from the first person we thought about. . In fact, the research now demonstrates that people who are motivated to be caring are **happier**, with **fewer health problems** and have **better** and **more supportive relationships** with others, than people who are highly competitive and materialistic. So we can look at the diagrams below and see how our basic motives – the kind of person we are trying to be – affects so many things in our minds.



So, different motives (competitive vs. compassionate) form different patterns in our minds (e.g., regarding attention, emotions, behaviours, etc.). Sometimes we can be very competitive and self-focused, at other times we can be very caring, and yet at other times we just want to have a good time with friends. In a way, life is about *how we balance* our different motives and ways of being in the world, and what we *choose to cultivate* within ourselves.

Importantly, one of the reasons to focus on compassion and particularly our 'Compassionate Self' is because it is connected to our biologically based 'caring motivational system', and this neurobiological system, as you will begin to understand, helps us to face difficulties. In this brief training seminar, we're going to ask you to spend some time focusing on your caring and compassionate self, trying to bring that more and more into your everyday life. Research around the world, including our own, is suggesting that spending some time each day thinking about compassion and how we could enact it in our life, for ourselves and for others, can have quite a major impact on our bodies, our sense of self, and our relationships with other people. With this Compassion Mind Training Seminar you will explore such training and practices. So your experiences and observations are very important for us and will help us move forward in our efforts to help people develop compassion.

Understanding our emotions

Developing compassion within us can also mean understanding and working with our emotions. Now we can start understanding our emotions by once again recognising that the human brain has been evolving over many millions of years. This is why we share with many other animals basic motivations. They, like us, are motivated to find food, avoid harm and dangers, live with others in groups, form relationships, seek out sexual opportunities, and look after their

offspring. To help us with these life tasks we have evolved different types of emotions. There are at least three types of emotion or affective systems that are useful to understand and know about. These are emotions that help us with three fundamental things in life: 1. Dealing with threats; 2. Seeking and having a drive or incentive to acquire and want things; and 3. Contentment and soothing. Thus, the way our brains and emotions work is complex, and they interact with each other (see the diagram below).

Diagram 1 Three Types of Emotion



Threat emotions

All animals need to be able to notice threats, and for our bodies to change in such a way that we can deal with them (e.g., fight or flight). So, for example, anger, anxiety, and disgust are basic emotions that are easily stimulated by signals of threat. For the most part *threat activates us* and directs our attention and thinking to danger and ways to protect ourselves. When threats seem overwhelming, however, we can experience a reduction in our energy and in a sense become 'deactivated'. When we then have these feelings they're more likely to be associated with depression.

There are a number of things to be aware of in terms of our threat emotions. First they are the most powerful emotions in us. Notice, for example, how a threat emotion can usually (and very quickly) turn off a positive emotion. Imagine, for example, you are on a field trip to a local bird reservoir with a group of students exploring nature, then you suddenly see one of your student's

trip and fall into the reservoir – your enjoyment of the field trip and your collective appreciation of nature (e.g. you, your colleagues and your students) would disappear very quickly! The response of your brain and body would entail an immediate switch into a state of fear/anxiety to ensure you react quickly in this threatened situation (e.g. to rescue the pupil). So, as this example demonstrates, threat grabs hold of our attention extremely rapidly and is associated with rapid changes in our bodily states –which often suppress positive feelings.

. Our threat system also makes lots of mistakes, that is, we can see danger or threats when they don't exist. And that is because it is better for us to be safe than sorry.

Threat emotions can also distort how we experience what is happening around us and make us miss out on many positive things. For example, imagine that it's Christmas and you go Christmas shopping. You go into 10 shops and in nine of those shops the shop assistant is very helpful to you and you are very pleased with what they help you buy. But in one shop the assistant is extremely rude, keeps you waiting, and does not appear to want to help you. Then they give you the wrong change and deny it! Who do you think about when you go home? Who do you talk to your partner about? The chances are it will be the rude one and your anger at them might stay with you for a while.

Even though anger won't do your mood or body much good (e.g., raised blood pressure), and you might have made your partner angry with you, it's because our brains are designed to focus on and hold onto threat, because in really dangerous situations this aids our survival. So even though 90% of the people were kind to you *these* many positive memories, which if you brought them to mind would give you positive feelings, are often quickly forgotten.

Now think what would happen if you'd noticed your brain was doing this – that is, holding you in threat mode, with all the feelings and bodily processes associated with it – and on noticing this, you instead chose to remember each of the shop assistants who was kind to you. What do you think would happen in your mind and in your body if you learnt to practice focusing on that? The problem is, through no fault of our own, our threat emotions are automatic because they are designed to be. But sometimes this is not helpful and we need to learn how to notice (become mindful of) when our threat system is doing this to us. Then we can shift attention into something more helpful. Because of how our brains are, threat emotions can be held in the mind whereas positives flow quickly through. And because we don't hold onto positive emotions deliberately and on purpose they won't be there long enough to have a much impact on our bodies and our brains. We can almost miss them entirely or dismiss them as being '*what is*

expected.’ Thus, we lose these opportunities of positive impact on mind and body. So although compassion training will help us face the difficult things in us it will also help us pay attention to what is helpful, what is good in us what brings a sense of calmness and also joyfulness.

Pleasure and active emotions

Just as we have emotions that come when we feel threatened, blocked or thwarted so we also have emotions that help us seek out good things. These emotions, such as pleasure, excitement, and fun are often associated with achieving or obtaining things. However, a problem here is that these feelings often don’t last very long because once we’ve obtained something then it’s not long before we want something else. Many researchers worry that today in Western societies there is too much emphasis on the positive feelings associated with achieving and owning. And think about what happens if you try to achieve things and fail –what do you end up feeling? Not uncommonly you can feel threat emotions of anxiety, frustration, disappointment and even sadness or depression. And one thing that is very common is that people can become critical and blame themselves for their failures or difficulties which makes them feel much worse. Not knowing what to do to feel better they may pick themselves up and then try to achieve more and so the whole cycle sets up again – constantly striving. And we also have a tendency to want more and more. This is very clear when, for example, someone has good grades or a good house, but still feels it’s not enough. If we’re not careful we could find ourselves spending much of our lives rushing around trying to do things for achieving more and more.

So the positive emotions of achieving, having, owning, doing are fine up to an extent. But we have to be careful with them because they can become addictive and when we don’t get what we want we can go into threat and a self-critical mode. So it is very useful to become mindful of what it is we strive for, the pleasures we get from that, and what happens in our mind when things don’t work out as we want them to – are we able to accept the setbacks as part of the ups and downs of life or might we become very angry frustrated and self-critical?

Note too that sometimes we are driven to do things *to avoid threats* – for example, we feel we have to study very hard in order to avoid feeling like we’re failing. Learning to develop our inner compassionate self is a way of dealing with this difficulty.

Threat and drive can actually have quite similar effects within our mind and bodies, despite feeling qualitatively different. One reason for this is that they are both associated with activation of the ‘sympathetic nervous system’ (SNS). The SNS is part of your body’s ‘autonomic nervous

system' (ANS); it is the branch associated with action preparation. Occasionally, people talk about the SNS in terms of the 4F's (i.e. fight, flight, fun and the fourth can lead to babies!), all which require action! There is, however, a further type of emotion responding associated with the second arm of the ANS – the 'parasympathetic nervous system' (PNS). These emotions are those that make us feel calmed, soothed and connected – often the opposite to how we feel when threatened or driven!

Contentment soothing and safeness emotions

So, we have a set of emotions and bodily states that are linked to *not* being under threat, and *not* seeking to strive or achieve things. These emotions are linked to feelings of peaceful contentment – been able to accept things as they are. Threat emotions, and excitement/drive emotions, are all very activating aren't they? Contentment emotions however have an effect on *slowing* the body down, because they act through our parasympathetic system.

These emotions can help us slow down and calm down, chill out and be more restful and peaceful. It is important to recognize that these emotions are also very important in caring behaviours. The reason for this is that caring behaviour actually also has an effect on helping us to feel more at peace and calm within ourselves. Consider for example what it is that helps a young child feel safe, content and happy? Having others around him/her that look after him/her is very important. Think about a young baby who is distressed. The mother picks the baby up, rocks him/her, speaks gently, may be strokes them softly, and gradually the baby calms down. When children are stressed or hurt themselves they immediately run back to the parent or caregiver who then reassures them, cuddles them, and calms the child down. So we *have systems in our brain which help us to calm down when we encounter caring, kindness and affiliation from others*. Keep in mind too, as mentioned above, that the kindness, support and compassion of others is not only calming, but can also help us face things that are difficult for us.

Think about how much easier it is for us as adults to feel at peace, with a sense of contentment, if we feel that people around us really like us, value and care about us. How different that is than if we feel that others don't really care about us or might even dislike us. Now of course sometimes we are living in circumstances where relationships are difficult for us. But the point we are making here is simply to see that affiliative, friendly, helpful behaviour has a real impact on our ability to reduce feelings of threat without relying too much on the drive system.

Self-safeness. - It turns out that it's absolutely the same *when we relate to ourselves*. If our self-monitoring system that has evolved with our new form of self-awareness has a tendency to not value ourselves, e.g. to be overly self-critical, then we are going to get locked into the threat system. But if we have a way of standing back and deliberately choosing to become more compassionate with ourselves, we move out of the threat system and more into this calming and soothing system. This can of course be a struggle **and that's why we're going to teach you how to do it**. It's important to recognise that learning to be self-compassionate does not in any way make you less committed. In fact, you already know this – you have a deep wisdom about this as the below will show you.

Imagine you have a child you love and you have a choice of two schools. In the first school the teacher tells you that they work very hard with the children. If the children make mistakes the teachers are quite critical fault finding punishing and hostile. If they find out a child has naughty thoughts or feelings they will shame them. They tell you that *"we will constantly monitor your child and be critical and punishing if they are not as we want them to be – we will ensure they are frightened of making mistakes or doing bad things"*. In other words, they will teach them in such a way that the threat system will run their lives. Now of course some children will rebel against this and do exactly the opposite, but others will of course be subdued. So do you want your child's mind run by its threat system?

In the other school the teacher says: *"Well, you know growing up is very difficult and our minds are quite tricky because they have all kinds of thoughts and feelings and impulses in them. Don't worry, we will help your child learn about their minds, and when they make mistakes we will help them reflect on those mistakes and learn from them. At every step of the way we will encourage your child to be caring and value themselves and others and to face up to what they need to face up to and be inspired to learn and do well."* In fact, we now know that we are at our most content and feel most safe and happy when we feel safe with others and cared for. Indeed, science has shown that the human brain and body function best under two conditions: when we are caring and valuing to others and when we feel cared and valued by ourselves.

Okay, so which school are you going to put your child into? Well, it's kind of obvious! You see the problem is that when it comes to ourselves we are like the situation with the Christmas shoppers. It's very easy for us to focus on the negative things in us and the things we don't do so well and forget about the good things that we do. So this is one way of helping you recognise that by becoming more self-compassionate you actually will become stronger and more

dedicated to whatever it is you want to achieve, but you will be doing it in a very different way than by constantly criticising and threatening yourself when things are difficult or you discover things in yourself that are unpleasant.

Understanding that we have many different mini-selves within us

Given then that we have these different motives and drives, and associated with these we have many different types of emotions, you won't be surprised to hear that our minds are complex with many shades and colours to them. We can be calm and relaxed at times, frustrated and irritable at other times, or excited and joyful at further times etc. So the human mind is a very mixed bag of potential mood states, emotions and feelings, and ways of being in the world. We rarely stand back and think *"well, given all these potential emotions and desires that I didn't actually choose but are there because I have this type of brain, what kind of self do I want to become. What kind of self do I want to train to become?"*

Now it turns out that these different aspects of ourselves are actually quite like *mini-selves* that can hold our attention and focus. They come with their own ways of thinking, feelings in the body, their own ways of taking actions and are linked to their own memories. An easy way to think about our different mini-selves or possible selves, and how powerful they can be, is with an example:

Imagine an argument with somebody you like or care about. So bringing that to mind we're now going to *direct attention* to different aspects of ourselves (different mini-selves) that can be aroused by the argument. Let's start with the part of you that feels irritated, annoyed or angry by the argument. We will call that that *your 'angry self'* for short.

So first focus on how *'angry self' thinks* about the argument. Maybe this part of you tends to be quite blaming and judgemental. Maybe you think your friend has been unreasonable, uncaring, thoughtless or making demands. So, *'angry self'* tends to think about things in a particular way. Next notice how *'angry self' feels* in your body. Anger can put our heart rate up and tense up our muscles. *'Angry self'* has a particular facial expression and voice tone. So *'angry self'* affects our bodies.

Next notice how *'angry self' behaves (or wants to act)* in certain way: perhaps become more forceful, raise your voice or say things to make your friends see *your point of view* or even to hit out or get your own back. How often have we said or done things in anger that later we regret?

In the extreme of course '*angry self*' can become violent. And when we reflect on anger all kinds of memories can come to mind. We may recall things we have been angry about in the past, and that can add to the feelings of anger. Or when feelings of anger arise in our bodies we might recall times when others were angry with us, perhaps in our childhood.

So that's interesting -- the '*angry self*' sees the world in the particular kind of way, and changes the body and the brain in a particular kind of way, it wants to act in a particular kind of way and has its own memories. For individuals who are very prone to letting '*angry self*' run them they can have many memories of being hurt or rejected and feeling angry with other people's behaviour. Since we all have a potential '*angry self*' within us the question we have to ask is: "To what extent do we want this to run our lives or just take us over and say and do things that later may not be very helpful to us?" '*Angry self*' is a mini self that you may not want running your show. Aggressiveness is important but left to its own devices irritation, frustration and anger can be destructive –especially if we ruminate on them a lot.

But as we said, anger is not the only mini-self possible in this situation of arguing with your friend. Another possible mini-self is '*anxious self*'. So let's do the same thing but this time we are going to focus on '*anxious self*'. So first focus on how '*anxious self*' thinks about the argument. Maybe this part of you tends to think about possible damage to the relationship, or there might be a voice in the back of your head telling you that you are the one who is being unreasonable. You might worry that you're not going to be able to put your point of view very well and will end up looking silly in some way. So '*anxious self*' tends to think about things in a particular way. Next notice how '*anxious self*' feels in your body. Worry and anxiety can also put our heart rate up and tense up our muscles but in different ways. For example, if we have become very anxious we can experience our knees shaking and wanting to run to the loo. That never happens out of anger. '*Anxious self*' has a particular facial expression and voice tone too. Next notice how '*anxious self*' behaves (or wants to act) in certain ways: perhaps become quiet, try to avoid the argument, back off or even be submissive and apologetic (even if we know we are right). Well like '*angry self*', '*anxious self*' doesn't think very deeply about conflicts or any situation really because it has its own agenda of trying to avoid or escape harms.

Notice too that every emotion has a history and so we very rarely experience an emotion completely new. This is why some people can get angry or anxious over (what appear to be) trivial things because actually what's behind trivial things are emotional memories.

Inner conflicts: What's also very important to recognise is that these different types of mini-selves within us can often be in conflict. For example, think for a moment what does '*angry self*' think about '*anxious self*'? When you ask people this it often turns out that '*angry self*' is not very happy with '*anxious self*', may not even like '*anxious self*' and sees '*anxious self*' as a bit of a wimp. Indeed, '*angry self*' may even get angry with '*anxious self*' from being anxious! Looked through the eyes of '*anxious self*' however '*angry self*' can be very scary indeed and needs regulating! So different parts can be in conflict with each other because they see the world in different ways and want to act in different ways.

Now we could do this exercise with all kinds of min-selves such as '*sad self*', '*happy self*', '*critical self*', '*ashamed self*', '*guilty self*', '*perfectionist itself*' and so on. Basically then you can see that our brain goes into patterns and these different patterns have different ways of thinking, feeling, acting, and remembering. So the question is: can we start to choose a pattern and type of self that actually brings harmony to our bodies and minds and relationships?

Well indeed we can and this is called the Compassionate Self. So like any other aspect of self it has its own way of thinking, feeling, action tendencies, and memories.

So let's go back and think about the argument with a friend. We have seen what '*angry self*' and '*anxious self*' think, feel, and want to do, but supposing you could stand back and deliberately try to focus on what your *compassionate self* would ideally like to do in this situation. Now we are going to be training in compassionate self shortly, but to give you insight into how it works, just for the moment, imagine that your *compassionate self* recognises that the human brain easily gets into conflict, is able to be relatively calm and reflective, tries to see both sides of the argument, and wants to resolve the argument appropriately even if it's about respecting differences. How would that be different for you? What might the benefits be?

So *compassionate self* will recognise that arguments are part of life and this is a distressing event but both of you have different points of view and that's just the way in it is. *Compassionate self* may feel calmer in the body and have a more relaxed facial expression and voice tone and *compassionate self* may want to try to resolve the issue not by being aggressive ('*angry self*') or submissive ('*anxious self*') but by really trying to find the best ways to be helpful.

The power of attention

As we saw above attention is very powerful because where it settles will have an impact on our bodies and therefore it's quite useful for us to be aware of where our attention is. For example, if we asked you to sit on the chair and direct your attention to the left foot; then your right foot; and then pay attention to your fingers. What did you notice? When people do this they notice that when their attention is on the left foot they are not really aware of their fingers. This is important because it tells us two things about attention. What you pay attention to becomes bigger in your mind as if a spotlight has fallen on it and you become aware of all kinds of things. However, other things go into the shadows and you become unaware of them. For example, as you focus on your left foot you are not aware of your other foot.

So when one mini-self is 'in mind' in the spotlight of our attention many of our other mini-selves could be out of mind. So while you are caught up in '*angry self*' or '*anxious self*' or '*worrying self*' you may be unaware of all of the potential that sits within *compassionate self*. Only by noticing it and then directing attention may you be able to switch attention from one mini self to another – no different in principle from switching your attention between your left for your right foot – though our emotions of course make it more difficult.

So in essence this is what compassionate self training is about – beginning to notice when we are becoming overly dominated by mini-selves such as the '*angry self*', '*anxious self*', '*worrying self*', '*self-critical self*', and make a deliberate choice to switch to one's *compassionate self*. We can deliberately cultivate this self in our everyday lives rather than letting '*anxious self*' or '*angry self*' run the show.

Workbook Part II: Being a Parent

This Workbook is not one based on how to parent – it is not aiming to give parenting strategies. Rather this book is aimed at cultivating a compassionate-mind, one which is helpful to our wellbeing. However, we wanted to spend a little time discussing being a parent and how this relates to compassion.

Being a parent for many can be a very rewarding experience, but it also comes with its fair share of challenging moments. Consider this question, *“Before you became a parent, how much experience did you have with children or how much time were you spending with children?”* The response to this question will vary greatly of course, if you are a teacher, your response will be daily. But for many, becoming a parent doesn’t occur until 30 years of age (average age for fathers 33 and for mothers 30 years), and therefore it has been some time since they have had daily or even weekly contact with children. Thus, going from very little contact to 24 hours a day/7 days a week contact with children is a huge change and takes time to transition into the role. We can compound this of course, by having expectations that we should be great parents right from the beginning or that we can learn the skills very quickly and relatively easily from reading books and doing courses.

Being a parent for many is extremely rewarding and greatly valued. However, research has found that actually our happiness tends to drop slightly after we become a parent. This is important, as we often think parenting should be full of happiness and joy. But it makes a lot of sense, as when we become parents lots of sacrifices are made, we lose lots of sleep, we can experience lots of guilt, and we can worry incessantly about whether we are doing things ‘right’. Parents feel incredibly judged. Indeed, 90% of Mums and 85% of Dads feel judged about their parenting, with 45% saying they *feel judged all the time or nearly all the time*. When we feel judged like this it can make us stressed and often all we want to do is hide, escape, or run away. Others get angry. Another way of dealing with the judgement is to try and make sure you are the ‘perfect’ parent, so that you can only be judged positively or favourably.

So as parents, we can easily shift into the competitive mind-set, because we want to be the ‘best parents’ we can be, and we don’t want to make any mistakes, as that can lead to judgments, but also be bad for our children. That of course means we are constantly monitoring ourselves and what we do as a parent, we compare ourselves to other parents – *am I better or worse than*

other parents – and this kind of thinking can make us vulnerable to self-criticism, depression and anxiety.

As parents we are going to make mistakes. It is part of the role. But when we make mistakes how do we relate to ourselves? Is it with a competitive mind-set, one which is quick to attack and criticise? Or are we able to activate our compassionate mind-set? One which understands the struggle and wants to encourage you to keep trying because it is important to you.

We can also put unfair pressure on ourselves. For example, we can sometimes have expectations that our children should be able to do *‘more’* than what they actually can developmentally. And when children act, behave or do things *we think* they should be able to control, that can make us – the parents – feel bad. Take sharing, for example. We may think that others (strangers, parents) must see or view us as a bad parent if our 3-year-old child doesn’t share a toy with other children. But actually the child is not yet developmentally able to understand or engage in sharing behaviour of a toy.

So a child’s brain is still developing, indeed, the brain does 70% of its growing outside of the womb. Here are some quick brain facts of children. Importantly, these are just general principles and children will vary greatly:

- Children only recognise themselves in the mirror at age **18-20 months**
- Between **ages 4-5**, children only really start to think about others’ thoughts and feelings – referred to as **“Theory of Mind”**
- *43% of parents believe that children can **share and take turns** with other children before age 2, and 71% believe children have this ability before age 3.*
 - In fact, this skill develops between **3-4 years**.
 - Children only begin to **share equally at 6-7 years**.
- *36% of parents said that children under age 2 have enough **impulse control** to resist the desire to do something forbidden, and 56% said this happens before age 3.*
 - In fact, most children are not able to master this until **between 3.5 - 4 years of age**. And it takes longer for self-control to become more consistent.
- *Many parents believe children should be pro-social and do the right things from 2 years*
 - In fact, this skill develops much later.
 - Children **imitate antisocial behaviour until 4-5 years**, this likely starts to drop around **7-8 years** when social norms become more embedded.

As the above information shows, we can feel like our children should be able to do some of these things, when really their brain cannot do those things yet. But if we don't know this, some of us can start to criticise ourselves for it, because a good parent, a parent invested in their child would have made sure that their child can do these things.

But it is not your fault your child won't share things equally with others or does not have impulse control, these things take a great deal of time to develop. Your child is not being selfish or showing bad behaviour – they just can't do that skill yet.

Children need us to help co-regulate their emotions, as well as complete tasks. **This is nobody's fault, it is just part of being a human.**

Many parents believe and expect that children aged younger than 3.5 to 4 years should be able to control their emotions. Indeed, 24% of all parents of one-year-olds believe that children have the capacity to control their emotions, and 42% of parents believe their children should have this ability by two years. Thus, many parents of very young children think they should not have tantrums and emotional outbursts. And in these instances it can become easy to punish the children for not having emotional control. But the fact is they can't control them, we need to help them.

So being a parent is tricky, particularly if we have unrealistic expectations on ourselves and our children. The key is to not try and think of 'right' or 'wrong', as then you are judging. Rather, try to playfully work out what strategies might work or be helpful. Knowing that mistakes will happen, and that is OK. We learn from making mistakes and so do our children. If our children can see us being compassionate to ourselves in times of stress, hopefully they will imitate that as well.

Workbook Part III: Preparation for Practice

The exercises we are going to explore with you are designed to help you tap into your inner compassionate abilities and build inner compassionate qualities – to foster your *compassionate self*.

To do that we are going to focus on our use of imagery. We can start to simply imagine what our ideal *compassionate self* might be like even if we thought *in reality* we couldn't quite be like that. Now, we use imagery because we know that what we imagine can have powerful effects on our bodies and our minds. For example, if we are hungry and see a meal this can stimulate our saliva and stomach acids. But equally, if we just fantasise about a meal, maybe it's late at night and we've got no money to buy one, then just imagining the food can also stimulate our saliva and stomach acids. Another good example of how our *imagination* can stimulate our *bodily processes* can be seen when we fantasise something very erotic! If you purposely bring these images to mind they may stimulate processes in your body – in fact they stimulate a very particular area of your brain called pituitary to release hormones into your body – that is just how powerful your mind can be on your body.

In this respect, our body responds to our imagination in a similar way that it responds to the real world. So how and what we imagine then is going to have very major impacts in our bodies and brains. Indeed, when we criticise ourselves, we release stress hormones in much the same way as if others were criticising or bullying us!

Compassionate imagery

Compassionate imagery can work in the same way – that is, if we focus our minds on compassionate themes and ideas, this will affect our feelings and stimulate our bodily processes in particular ways. In fact, we know from research that if we focus on feelings of caring and being cared for, this can have a range of beneficial effects on our minds, feelings and bodies. New research is also showing that the more we focus on compassion and support for each other and ourselves, the happier and healthier we tend to be. We also know that regular practice can actually change our brains. In the same way as practicing an activity like playing the piano (or chess) changes the way our brain is structured, so too does practicing compassion. That is, compassion can really change how our brains function!

Before starting to practice...

We are going to explore some aspects that can be useful to have in mind before starting this practice.

1. Wandering mind

Whenever we try to do certain tasks, especially using our imagination or trying to focus, a very common difficulty is that our mind wanders all over the place. Do not be surprised to find that your mind wanders a lot when you try the practices. Indeed, you might not be able to keep your mind on the specific practice (imagery) for more than a couple of seconds. This is because our brains and minds *are designed to wander*, to be thinking of a range of things at the same time. So mind wandering is to be expected, also it is important to know that a wandering mind can be linked to our creativity. Indeed, the fact that you notice how much it wanders is part of the training.

So when we are doing any of the imagery exercises, the most helpful thing is to simply notice if your mind has wandered and return your attention to what you were focusing on. Although quite simple, in fact it is the noticing your mind wandering that is the work because that means your attention is beginning to help you notice how your mind is. So you're not trying to achieve anything in terms of emptying your mind of thoughts but simply noticing where your mind is, and then directing it gently to the exercise. Keep in mind that the kinder, gentler and more accepting you are of your wandering mind, and the less you try to force it to pay attention, the easier you may find these exercises over time.

You will also notice that when your mind has wandered and you've noticed it has wandered, your mind becomes slightly sharper at that moment of 'waking up'. Been caught up in our thoughts about various things we have to do is as if we entered a slight daydream for a moment. Then we wake up to the present to remind ourselves what we want to focus on.

Also key here is that your intention is simply to **try** – that's the important thing.

Now some days you may well find focusing easier than others and that's just because of how our minds are on particular days.

2. No clear pictures

Another common concern is that people often don't have clear pictures in their mind when they do imagery. We can then think we are not doing imagery right or it can't work for us. This is because we often misunderstand imagery. Supposing I ask you 'what's a car?' How would you answer that? What popped into your mind? It would be a fragmented image. If I asked you 'what did you have for breakfast today?' You would have some kind of image based on memory. If I asked you 'what summer holiday would you like?' You would have some kind of fleeting imagery based on what you like – e.g., hot or cold countries, doing activities or just sitting by a pool. These fleeting impressions are imagery. They are very fragmented, fleeting and impressionistic. Do not try to create Polaroid sharp or vivid pictures in your mind when you practice compassionate imagery. Fleeting impressions and fragments are what come to us, these impressions are fine and it's more important that we focus on the feelings we are trying to generate with our images. Keep these things in mind when we, or you, get into the practices.

3. No Time to Practice

Sometimes we find our lives are so busy that it's difficult to put time aside to practice. This is very common, and we are all like this. But there are several moments to practice throughout the day. For example, when standing by the bus stop, lying in the bath or during a coffee break. You can also focus on your practice first thing in the morning, giving yourself two minutes to focus on your breathing and one of your imagery tasks before you get out of bed. So to remind yourselves, you can put a note or post-it by your bedside, on the fridge or in other places that act as memory cues for you; or you can wear a bracelet or carry a semiprecious stone in your pocket. The point of this is that it is always there as a reminder when you look at your wrist or feel in your pocket - to prompt and remind you to practice one of the imageries.

The important thing is to remember that practice is the key to success. Cultivating our *compassionate self* helps us to develop our mind and to become more content with ourselves and more at peace and in harmony with those around us. As we practice we may find we're developing more commitment to these ideals and this in itself brings us a greater sense of fulfilment. If I asked you to run a marathon tomorrow, would you be able to do it? For most of us, the answer would be no and we'd need to take small steps (starting with purchasing the right trainers) on a regular basis until ready. The same is true for compassion, small steps and regular practice are key.

Workbook Part IV: The Actual Practices

During the next two weeks, you will learn to build and cultivate your *compassionate self*.

To help you in your practice, use the following pages of this manual where we provide an explanation for all the exercises. You will also have at your disposal several audio files with the guided practices. It is important that you read the manual before you start practicing.

Initially, it is important to develop the essential bases for building the compassionate self. To help you in this process, there are several practices you can use:

- ❖ **Posture**
- ❖ **Facial expressions and voice tone**
- ❖ **Soothing rhythm breathing**
- ❖ **Mindfulness**

We suggest that you practice **at least once a day each** of these exercises. The ideal is that you stop practicing only when you are familiar with these bases. In that case, you can practice only the compassionate training exercises.

To help you cultivate your compassion self, there are several practices you can use:

- ❖ **Building and cultivating your compassionate self**
- ❖ **Compassionate Other**
- ❖ **Compassion for the self**

We suggest that you practice these exercises **at least once a day** during the next **two weeks**.

The bases for the compassion training

Postures

To help us access our compassionate mind states and getting into that sense of ourselves it's very useful to work with our bodies and breathing. So the following exercises will help you create inner conditions for compassionate development. Our posture is very helpful for creating feelings of stability in the self which in turn can help us create compassionate mind states and build our compassionate self. For example, imagine standing with your feet and heels together and somebody pushes you from the side. It's very easy to topple over! But supposing you stand with your feet a shoulders width apart, with your knees ever so slightly bent and feeling your weight going down through your body to the ground so that you feel stable. What happens now if somebody pushes you from the side? Now you're much more secure and less likely to topple over. It is the same with our minds. Finding a point of stability within our minds allows us to deal with the ups and downs of life. For the mind, finding stability is linked to posture, breathing and focus.



Track 1

Posture

We can use our bodies to create body states that will help us access our compassionate motives and sense of self. We can begin by paying attention to our posture which supports a particular style of breathing and also a sense of grounding in the body. So, before we begin the practices, let's focus on posture. And we will do this exercise sitting down. Although it's important to practice it standing as well. Sit in a comfortable chair that allows you to sit with your back upright and your shoulders slightly back. Notice that if you are sitting at the computer we tend to curl a shoulders in and close up the chest so for this exercise we are going to sit up straight lift your shoulders up and backwards, Notice how that opens the chest and the diaphragm for breathing. You might practice that movement. When we are slightly threatened or anxious shoulders tend to curl inwards crunching up the diaphragm and chest so we deliberately open their shoulders and chest for this breathing exercise. Notice too that when you do this your back goes from a convex to a concave shape, in other which you get us different curve with the curve pointing in towards the diaphragm.

Place your feet firmly on the ground, shoulders width apart, and your shoulders should be more or less in line with your hips and ears over the shoulders. Try to sit away from the back of the chair so you can keep your back straight. So this is a body posture which is to create stability for us. It is in a way the posture of confidence and authority. It is important to find a posture that is comfortable and that helps you be in a state of alertness and vigilance, but at the same time don't let your muscles become too relaxed. Try to adopt a posture that helps you to keep your back straight, aligned, but not rigid. Note the natural curvature of your back, with your ears in line with your shoulders. Let the body relax. However, this is not letting the muscles become floppy like for sleep but more like imagining a diver on a diving board preparing to take the dive. The body is relaxed but not floppy and it's preparing for concentrated attention and action.

You can close your eyes or keep them softly open, looking down at about 45°. If you find yourself becoming sleepy at any point in the exercises just let your eyes open a little. You can rest your hands softly on your lap. So you are creating a posture of alertness and serenity, with an internal sensation of stability. A stable and calm posture, just like a diver that walks to the edge of the platform and calms him/herself down by creating a point of stability. This position and posture also convey strength and authority.

While you are sitting doing the exercises, see if you can feel like a mountain – equally solid and strong. With this posture we can calm our mind and prepare it to the practices that follow.

Using facial expression and voice tones

There are other ways beside our posture through which we can use our mind to change our body. Method actors, for example, know that the way we use our voice tones and facial expressions has a great impact in our body. Good actors can deliberately create states of mind within them by using voice tones and facial expressions. We are going to explore how we can do the same using specific techniques.



Track 2

How to use facial expression and voice tones

In this exercise you will explore how you can deliberately evoke certain emotional states by using voice tones and facial expressions. We will begin by exploring the difference between a neutral **facial expression** and a friendly facial expression. The idea is that you simply notice what happens when you deliberately change your facial expression between these two states.

We are also going to look at the power of the emotional textures of our thoughts. It's not just what we think but how we think. For example, the tone of our thoughts can be harshly critical or supportive and understanding. Just like the voice tones people use when they talk to you can have a big impact on us, so can the emotional tones of your thoughts can have an impact on you. Often, we are not aware of the emotional tone of our thoughts but if our thoughts have a hostile tone that will stimulate our threat system, this will have an impact in our body. When we're practicing developing our compassionate self, it's important to pay attention to the tone we use and stimulate an internal voice tone that is compassionate and friendly. Let's do an exercise to explore the effects of our voice tone.

To explore how powerful facial expressions and voice tones can be you will first sit in a stable and alert position and gently closing your eyes, and feel comfortable.

During this exercise, you will keep a neutral facial expression for a few seconds, then you will switch to a gentle smile and friendly facial expression. Imagine you are with a friend that you care about and that feeling of friendship and kindness towards them is expressed through your face, so you are also trying to create a feeling in your facial expression.

As you repeat this exercise, just try to notice how creating these facial expressions can change your feelings even subtly.

Begin by creating a neutral facial expression and try to keep it for several seconds.

15 seconds

Now try to create a friendly facial expression.

15 seconds

Now again try to create a neutral facial expression.

15 seconds

Finally, create again a friendly facial expression.

15 seconds.

Reflect for a moment how this experience was for you. Notice how you felt in each situation. Of course you can think this is an artificial situation, but that is not the point here. The important thing is to notice how we can stimulate certain mental states by creating different facial expressions.

Now we're going to explore the emotional textures of our thoughts by focusing on tones.

Once again, hold the posture you have been practising with the breathing that you have been practising. We are now going to say hello to ourselves on the outbreath and this means naming yourself. So first on each outbreath just with a neutral voice tone say hello to yourself, naming yourself. So if your name is Jayne or Jon it would be *hello Jayne* or *hello Jon*. We will then contrast that with a friendly tone and again the idea is to create a voice tone; imagine your greeting somebody you really like and are pleased to see really try and create that feeling in your voice tone

So when we do the exercise we are going to combine facial expression and voice tones. We start with neutral, creating a neutral facial expression and a neutral voice tone saying hello to yourself. When we switched to friendly create that friendly face expression again with the feeling in the face and also the friendly voice tone as you greet yourself.

So let's start then first 20 seconds of neutral face and neutral voice tone saying hello to yourself

20 seconds

Friendly facial expression and friendly voice tone and now with

20 seconds

Now back to neutral facial expression and neutral voice greeting

20 seconds

And now back to friendly facial expression and voice tone

So, during this exercise you might have noticed that practicing creating a friendly facial expression and voice tone can stimulate these feelings in you. Thus, it can be useful in some of the practices to try to adopt a friendly facial expression and voice tone.

Now when you are ready open your eyes or refocus and look around you, and take a stretch, moving your body.

Soothing rhythm breathing

Before we do the breathing practices a very quick word about how our bodies work in terms of arousal systems. Basically when we are charging around doing things or responding with anxiety or anger, we are in a state that is linked to what is called sympathetic arousal. When we're no longer in drive or threat mode the body can switch to what is called 'a rest and digest' mode. This is called parasympathetic arousal. For now we will simply note that when our sympathetic system is over aroused, breathing becomes shallower and quicker and that increases the tendency towards anxiety or irritation. In contrast, when we slow and deepen our breathing we engage the parasympathetic system. This helps us to feel calmer and more at ease with ourselves. Learning to train our minds and bodies to become more in-tune with our parasympathetic systems can be very helpful for well-being and also for cultivating the compassionate self. So together with the postures above and focusing on slowing and deepening the breathing we are now going to look at what we call soothing rhythm breathing – in reality playing with trying to create a sense of stillness within.



Track 3

Soothing rhythm breathing

The following exercise will guide you through a short training exercise in soothing rhythm breathing. This is a helpful breathing rhythm for beginning working on compassion.

The way we breathe can have a great impact on our body. When we are anxious and stressed breathing becomes shallower and quicker and this keeps our anxiety and

stress levels high. Learning how to breathe in a way that stimulates our soothing system can be useful because it provides a basis for the development of our compassionate self. Let's practice a way to breathe that involves deliberately slowing down our breathing and grounding our body.

First, sit comfortably with your feet flat on the floor, about a shoulders width apart, and your back straight and head in line as we learn just now. Your posture is comfortable but up right because the idea is to become relaxed but also to stay alert rather than to become floppy or sleepy. Gently close your eyes, or look down at the floor or allow your gaze to be unfocused if you prefer.

Now focus on your breathing, on the air coming in through your nose, down into your diaphragm, staying a short while and then moving back out through your nose. Notice how your diaphragm moves gently as you breathe in and out. For the development of soothing rhythm breathing we will be breathing slightly slower and slightly deeper than you would normally. The in-breath is often about 4-5 seconds ... hold ... and then take 4-5 seconds for the out-breath. You might try to breathe a little faster and then a little slower until you find a breathing pattern that is comfortable for you and has a gentle rhythm to it – giving you the feeling of 'slowing down'. Ideally you want to get to about 5-6 breaths per minute

1 minute

When you breathe out let it be a gentle collapse rather than anything forced – like a paper bag just gently letting air out.

Focus particularly on the out breath and the air leaving your nose with a steady rhythm. Try to ensure that the in breath and the out breath are even and don't rush them.

1 minute

As you develop your rhythm, notice and focus on the feeling of *inner slowing* with each out breath. Notice how your body responds to your breathing, as if you are linking up with a rhythm within your body that is soothing and calming to you. Notice how this links to your friendly facial expression. Let's practice that for some moments.

30 seconds

Now we can just 'ground ourselves for a moment'. Sensing the weight of your body resting on the chair and the floor underneath you. Maybe notice how your body feels slightly heavier in the chair now that you have slowed your breath. So in this moment then allow yourself to feel held and supported...coming to rest in the present moment...staying alert with good body posture. Feel the stableness in your body that has come from the slowing and feeling slightly heavier.

Also try to sense the capacity for inner stillness or stilling – like the calmness of a lake or a tree – still, without wind.

Remember that it is perfectly ok for your mind to wander. Simply notice it happening and then gently guide your attention back to an awareness of your body and breathing steadily in and out just sensing the flow of air coming in and out of your nostrils...just gently observing...just allowing things to be as they are. Feeling your body slowing down.



Suggestion

As suggested above, soothing rhythm breathing can be practiced at any moment, on the bus, train, or even when taking a shower. The more you practice noticing how your breathing affects your body, the more you will get used to slowing down. Sometimes it's important to remember to slow down using our breath even for only 30 seconds or one minute. The more we practice, the more we get used to slowing our body but also keeping our mind alert. Keep in mind that slowing down doesn't mean that you will mentally slowdown, in fact this breathing can actually help you be more alert and concentrate because when calm, you engage the thinking part of your brain (e.g. the frontal cortex) more easily.

Mindfulness

Before we begin cultivating our compassionate self, we first begin by training mindfulness. Mindfulness is paying attention, with purpose and intention, to the activity of our mind a non-

judging way – take a step back and notice whatever comes to mind without being carried away by our habitual and automatic reactions and comments. Mindfulness practice promotes the development of internal stability, which is an important foundation for the compassionate training. The starting point for the mindfulness training is to simply notice what is happening in our minds in this moment.

So let's see if we can develop our observing mind, through the following practice:



Track 4

Mindfulness exercise

Sit comfortably in your chair with a stability and alertness posture, as practiced before. Adopt a friendly facial expression, and a slight smile. Try to focus on the sensations of your body slowing down, becoming heavier and stable. Now try to find a breathing rhythm that is comfortable and natural to you, and bring your attention to your body. Note the sensations that are present in the body at this moment. You may notice sensations of pressure for example, the weight of your body against the chair), tension (for example, in your shoulders and neck), or more vague sensations of tingling or palpitations in some areas of your body. Try to be aware of these sensations as if you were feeling them from within (from your mind's eye) and not by thinking about them. Rest in this awareness of the body for one minute or so, noticing only these different sensations.

1 minute

Now that you are completely immersed/rooted in your body, let go of any goal or intention and only observe what emerges in your awareness. Notice what happens to your mind. When you do this you may notice how it so easily wanders away to all kinds of thoughts and feelings arising or to sounds and smells from the outside world. It is likely that sooner or later your attention will wander to any thoughts or feelings that appear in your mind. When this happens, notice the thoughts or feelings that captured your attention and let it go, and gently refocus your attention in the body, in a sensation that is more evident for you in this moment. Maybe sensations of contact between your body and the chair or the floor. For the next minute, simply try to notice when your mind wanders to thoughts or feelings, and gently bring it back to your body.

1 minute

The sensations in your body are like an anchor for when your mind wanders and gets lost in your thoughts. Keep the intention of not having any goal or purpose and just be present in your experience of this moment with your thoughts and sensations, without judging them. Just being.

1 minute

So the key thing really is: notice how you can wake up to observe your mind has wandered! This observation is the important thing, not the fact that your mind wandered or not.

These practices help us to become more observing and more fully present with our experiences of the outside (which come to us in our senses) and the inside worlds.

5 seconds

Reflect for a moment on how this practice was for you. You may have noticed that the mind is always moving and has difficulty staying in the present moment. And this is not our fault. However, although we cannot control what emerges in our mind, we can choose where to focus our attention and this will change our whole experience.



Mindfulness and the senses

We can also use any of the senses to help us ground us in the present moment. So for example lay, sit or stand for one minute and just listen – to any sounds that come

to you - just listen to whatever sounds are in this moment for you. Try to be non-judgemental, just experience whatever there is to experience.

You can then do the same with your vision. Just notice the lights and the colours around you without judgement.

You can also practice this while you're walking. When you go walking notice the sounds and the colours around you without judgement – just being fully aware of the senses of the present moment. Sometimes when our thoughts become troubling it helps just to bring attention to the centres of the present moment – to just let our thoughts go and leave them alone.

Reflection of the mindfulness exercise

What you may have noticed is that although we made the decision to simply observe our experience, our mind rapidly hijacked our attention for thoughts, even when we decided to do nothing, to not think, but simply observe. Thus, it seems that our mind has a constant and automatic habit of taking us from the present and taking us to our thoughts, when we are not focused in any particular topic. This habit is so strong that is the opposite of our decision making process. This is the restless mind. This is the mind that is always moving and struggles to stay in the present moment. What this exercise shows us is that we can sit our body and stay in the same place, but our mind rarely does the same, even though we want it to. On the contrary, it quickly wanders from thought to thought. This wouldn't be a problem if most of our thoughts and emotions were pleasant but most times this is not the case. And of course, as we saw before, our thought can stimulate our affective systems, such as the threat-defence system. And as we also saw, we are always trying to avoid things that threaten us and looking for things that we need to survive and to feel comfortable. And so it's not our fault that our minds are naturally restless, because we were programmed this way by evolution to be constantly alert to dangers and other things that we may need or want. And so the aim is just to observe what's happening, and not thinking that we shouldn't be like this, or that we should have more control over our mind, also because if we reflect on the mindfulness exercise that we briefly practiced we realize that we don't have control over our internal world. Thus, if we simply let our minds wander to our habitual patterns of thought and commentary, that can often be quite negative, and if we take those thoughts as reality, then we don't have much freedom of choice, and we probably won't have much tranquillity and stability. What is proposed here is to simply notice these movements of our mind without judging, and to bring our attention back to concrete

experiences. Because even though we can't control what emerges in our mind, we can choose where to focus our attention and that will change our whole experience.

To cultivate compassion, we will use all these practices. We will focus on the body, with specific rhythmic breathing, and we will be constantly aware of the present moment in a way that we can pay attention/note what is going on in our minds. Following on from this we will be ready to begin compassion training.

Compassion Training

In the following practices, we will begin the compassion training. In the first exercise we will learn to build and cultivate our compassionate self.



Track 5

Building and cultivating the Compassionate Self

In this practice, you will learn how to cultivate your compassionate self. To begin, choose a moment when you are unlikely to be disturbed for a while and sit comfortably. And you may like to close your eyes if you feel comfortable doing this.

So let us begin by remembering our body posture and breathing. So get comfortable in your chair, feet flat on the ground, shoulders back, and chest open, opening up the diaphragm. And focus on your soothing rhythm breathing, with the air coming in through your nose down gently into your diaphragm and out through your nose again. Remember that this is breathing slightly deeper and slower than you would normally, notice the feeling of your body slowing down.

Try to relax your facial muscles starting with your forehead, your cheeks and letting your jaw drop slightly. Then allow your mouth to turn upwards into a slight smile until you feel it is comfortable, a warm and friendly smile. Remember as we go through the exercise you may find your mind wandering. Do not worry about that, just gently and kindly bring it back onto the task we are doing.

And now imagine, as best you can, that you are a wise and compassionate person. It may be useful to bring to mind a situation when you felt compassion for another person. Try to remember what you thought, your feelings of kindness and care and your genuine wish for that person to be well.

Now, for a moment think about the qualities you would like to have if you were a deeply compassionate person. Remember it doesn't matter if you don't feel that you actually are a deeply compassionate person. The most important thing is to simply

imagine the qualities of a deeply compassionate person, and that you have them – you are stepping into this potential version of you, almost like an actor if you will stepping into this role of a compassionate character.

10 seconds

Now we're going to focus on some very specific qualities of compassion that you can add to your own personal and unique qualities you want to create in your compassionate self.

These are the qualities of your compassionate wisdom, strength and commitment. So the compassionate self has a deep wisdom that we all just find ourselves here part of the flow of life, with a tricky brain that can get is caught up in worry loops, anger and depression – and this is not your fault -- you have this wisdom right now and you understand other people could be like that too. So you have a wisdom of no-blame and judgment, but of openness and understanding that life is difficult and tricky at times.

30 seconds

Now try to imagine that your wisdom comes from a sense of strength and authority. Try to connect with an internal sense of strength, by focusing on your body posture and your soothing rhythm breathing. A solid posture, as if your body was a mountain, your breath a soft breeze, and your mind a clear and open sky. Feel the strength that comes from being supported by the earth beneath you. Notice how you feel when you imagine this sense of authority and trust in your body.

Imagine how you would talk if you had this authority, how you would move in the world, how you would express this strength, this maturity, this confidence.

30 seconds

Now based on this strength, authority, and wisdom, try to focus on your commitment to be compassionate, and your desire to be helpful to people, to use wisdom and strength where you can and help others, as well as yourself.

30 seconds

Based on your wisdom, strength, and commitment, try to imagine that you have the courage to face difficult experiences. Imagine that you are willing to deal with difficulty, with no blame or criticism, and that you are willing to take responsibility for your life. For a few moments, keeping your friendly facial expression and voice tone, gently imagine that you are this person with a deep commitment and responsibility to deal with your mind and your life.

30 seconds

Notice how you feel when you imagine yourself like this, with these compassionate qualities. Remember it doesn't mean that you actually feel like this now; we are simply imagining what it would be like to be this way, a compassionate person.

Now to develop this practice a step further I'd like you to imagine you're watching a video of yourself. You see yourself getting up in the morning. Now holding your position of kindness and compassion, watch yourself moving around your room and slowly getting on with your day. Try to notice how the person that you're watching (yourself) is troubled by self-critical feelings or thoughts, maybe shame or fear, troubles about relationships past or present. Try to just be in touch with the person you are watching – try to notice the struggle and the suffering, but maintain your position of inner calmness and wisdom. In other words, looking out through the eyes of your compassionate self with the intention of being kind and helpful. Really get a sense of what this feels like, looking through the eyes of the compassionate self.

How would you respond to yourself when in pain or struggling? How would you respond to others? What would you say, how would you say it? Try to get a feel for what it would be like, to respond as your compassionate-self. It might be tricky, but just try to imagine, as best you can.

All we are doing is trying to get a feel for what it would be like, to be this compassionate person.

Now just letting that imagery go and return slowly back to our breath, noticing the rise and fall of our belly, and noticing the contact our body makes with the chair. Getting a greater sense of the room and space around us.

It is important to recognise that this compassionate self is one aspect or one pattern within us. And sometimes this pattern gets washed out by all these other parts of us that want to run the show, things like anger, anxiety, or depression. These are patterns that are created within us, in our bodies and brains.

So sometimes it is really helpful, to deliberately, try to create the compassionate pattern, as the way to help with the difficult struggles we experience.

You don't need to spend very long to cultivate your compassionate self either, you can do it anywhere. It is about trying to remember to build it into your daily life, almost like building a compassionate habit. So just pausing at different times, at times of struggle, and connecting with our posture, our soothing rhythm breathing, and the intention of our compassionate-self. And bringing it to those moments of disappointment and struggle so we can be helpful and compassionate to ourselves and others

And now, as way to finish this exercise, let go of any attempt to visualize and for a few moments just be, without paying attention to anything in particular and when you feel ready, you can open your eyes and gently stretch your body (and finish the practice).



Like an actor

If you were an actor trying to learn a role, you would pay attention to key elements of your character and you would try to enact these experiences inside you. You could be an angry, depressed or anxious character, or a happy, cheerful, and compassionate character. Like a good actor, you would think about the character's typical voice tone and facial expressions, how it thinks and interacts with the world.

In the same way, by building your compassionate self, try to be or become this compassionate character – living it from the inside – at least for brief moments. You can pay attention to the way this character thinks and sees the world, its posture, voice tone, and what it says.

However, sometimes we can start the day with good intentions until someone gets on your nerves! Don't worry about this, as all you need to do is notice this happening and bringing your attention back to your true intentions – which is to live as a compassionate self. So, there will be many challenges along the way but this is normal. There's always the choice to come back to your true intention, without judging.

Actors also use their memory of moments when they felt certain emotions and try to recreate them. All these techniques can be used when we are trying to focus on building the compassionate self. You can focus on how much you wish to bring compassion to your life or even to the world.

The most important thing in these exercises, however, is to remember that it doesn't matter if you feel you have these qualities or not. Instead, try to simply imagine how you would be if you had these qualities: kindness, wisdom, confidence, authority, and really wanting to be helpful. Imagining and thinking about how it would be to have these qualities of compassion may help you create and experience that is the compassionate self.

The compassionate self in relation to others and to oneself

In the following exercises we will continue to cultivate the compassionate self and this time we will bring to mind the compassionate qualities that we developed previously and active them by imagining being this compassionate being in relation to others and ourselves.

Now let's practice focusing on our compassionate self.



Track 6

Compassion for others

This is the practice of compassion for a close person.

To begin this practice, choose a moment when you are unlikely to be disturbed for a while and sit comfortably.

Always remembering to respect the process and prepare the body. So get comfortable in your chair, feet flat on the ground, shoulders back, and chest open, opening up the diaphragm. And focus on your soothing rhythm breathing, with the air coming in through your nose down gently into your diaphragm and out through your nose again. Remember that this is breathing slightly deeper and slower than you would normally, notice the feeling of your body slowing down.

Remember as we go through the exercise you may find your mind wandering. Do not worry about that just gently and kindly bring it back onto the task we are doing.

15 seconds

Now bringing to mind your compassionate self, with its qualities of wisdom, strength, and commitment, bring to mind someone you care about, to whom if feel genuine affection. It could be a child, friend, partner, parent or even an animal. Hold them in your mind's eye. Now as you're sitting in the chair with your compassionate self, focus your compassionate feelings on them. You wish for them to be happy and free from suffering, to feel fulfilled and peaceful.

With a compassionate facial expression and voice tone, name them in your mind as you breathe in and out and say the following on the out breath:

May you be free from suffering (again say their name)

May you be happy (again say their name),
May you flourish (and say their name),
May you leave with ease (and say their name).

30 seconds

Don't worry if you can't remember all the sentences, just focus on the ones you can. The sentences are not the most important thing – what matters is your genuine wish and your compassionate feelings.

May you be free from suffering (again say their name)
May you be happy (again say their name),
May you flourish (and say their name),
May you live with ease (and say their name).

1 minute

Maybe you notice feelings of satisfaction and joy when you imagine that the other person may be happy, free from suffering, and live with ease. But if not, don't worry about it; what matters is to cultivate this intention that the other person is well.

Now, when you feel ready, let the image of the other person fade. Spend a moment or two reflecting on the feelings that have arisen in you from focusing your compassionate feelings on someone you care about. Notice how that feels in your body.

15 seconds

For a few moments just be, without paying attention to anything in particular and when you feel ready, you can open your eyes and gently stretch your body (and finish the practice).



Track 7

Compassion for the self

In this practice, you will learn to cultivate compassion for yourself.

To begin this practice, choose a moment when you are unlikely to be disturbed for a while and sit comfortably.

Always remembering to respect the process and prepare the body. So get comfortable in your chair, feet flat on the ground, shoulders back, and chest open, opening up the diaphragm. And focus on your soothing rhythm breathing, with the air coming in through your nose down gently into your diaphragm and out through your nose again. Remember that this is breathing slightly deeper and slower than you would normally, notice the feeling of your body slowing down.

Remember as we go through the exercise you may find your mind wandering. Do not worry about that just gently and kindly bring it back onto the task we are doing

15 seconds

Now bringing to mind your compassionate self, with its qualities of wisdom, strength, commitment, try to create a picture of yourself in your mind's eye as if you're looking at yourself from the outside. Focus a sense of compassion on you – you as a fellow human being that has arrived in this world doing the best you can, and that sometimes is confronted with difficult feelings or life circumstances, and feeling overwhelmed and stressed.

Now with a compassionate facial expression and voice tone, keep this image of yourself in your mind and as you breathe in and out and say the following on the out breath:

May I be free from suffering

May I be happy

May I flourish

May I live with ease

30 seconds

If at any point you feel yourself pulled in to those difficult feelings or life circumstances come back to the compassionate self that stays with a sense of authority, calmness, maturity and wisdom.

May I be free from suffering

May I be happy

May I flourish

May I live with ease

15 seconds

For a few moments just practicing saying those things, directing those feelings to yourself on the outbreath. Free of suffering, to be happy, to flourish, to live with ease. Don't worry if you can't remember them all just focus on the one's that you can.

1 minute

Now, when you feel ready, let the image of yourself fade. Spend a moment or two reflecting on the feelings that have arisen in you. Notice how that feels in your body.

15 seconds

For a few moments just be, without paying attention to anything in particular and when you feel ready, you can open your eyes and gently stretch your body (and finish the practice).

Building your compassionate self

Try your best to do these exercises at least once a day. Remember throughout your day that you're living your life moment by moment through the perspective of your compassion self. Thus, at any moment, whether your relating to others or yourself, and especially in difficult situations, bring the wisdom, strength, commitment of your compassionate self to that situation.

Also, as part of this practice to cultivate your compassionate self, try to be in the world as a compassionate being, and try each day act in a compassionate way, towards you and others, at least once. Notice the joy and satisfaction that may follow.

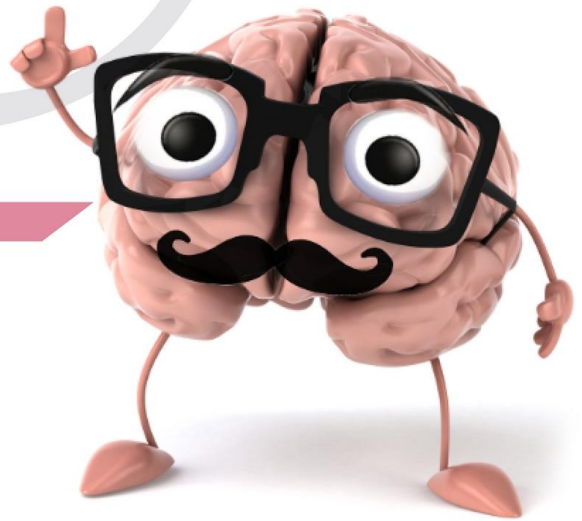
The more you practice your compassionate self the easier it will become. Developing your compassionate self, with its wishes to be helpful, with a sense of kindness, calm, confidence and wisdom can also be very helpful when you are going through difficult life circumstances and dealing with negative feelings. So, you can also use your compassionate self to help you deal with life difficulties, for example, if you're having problems with things you struggle to deal with, like anxiety or other difficult emotions. In this situation, practice stopping for a moment, connect to your soothing rhythm breathing, adopt the posture of your compassionate self. Imagine becoming your compassionate self. Then try to imagine how your compassionate self would relate to your anxious self, with your critic self, with your angry self, and help you deal with them in those situations. If you give yourself the possibility of creating this space, trying to slow down and bringing to mind what Self you would like to be, you may find this to be helpful in difficult moments. Also remember to use a warm voice tone with a genuine commitment and wish to be helpful.

Notes

Appendix A

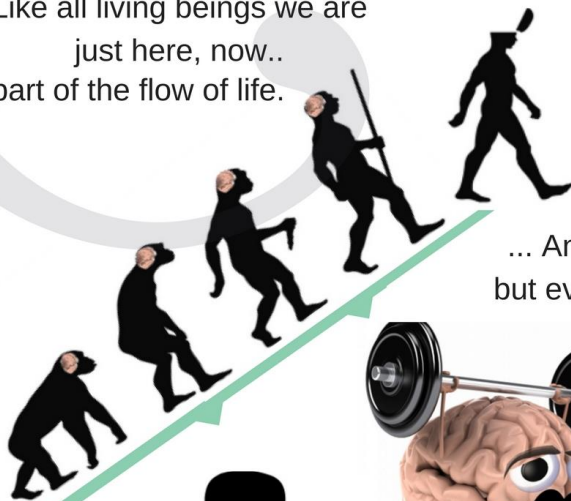
Tip Sheets

The Tricky Brain



The Flow of Life

Like all living beings we are just here, now.. part of the flow of life.



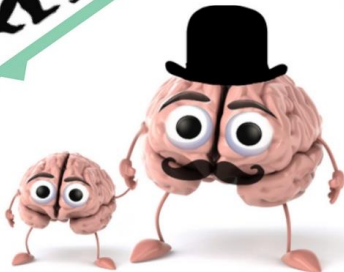
The Human Brain

... And with a brain we did not design, but evolved through thousands of years of evolution.



New Brain Capacity

Our brains have the capacity to imagine, have complex language and be creative. But they also have the capacity to ruminate and worry.

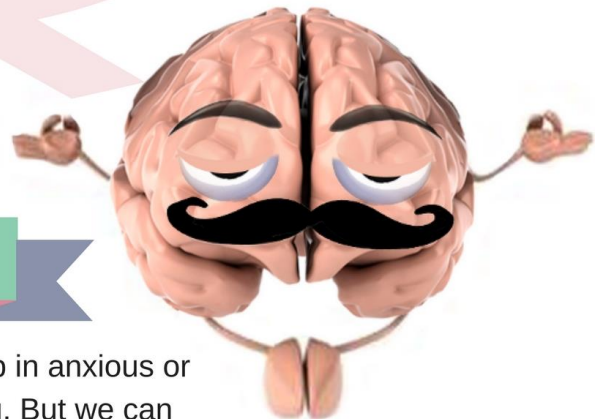


Shaped

We are shaped by our family, which we did not choose. Ask yourself: *would you be the same person if you had been kidnapped as a three day old baby and raised by the Mafia?*

It's Not Your Fault

It's not our fault that our brains get caught up in anxious or depressive loops. Our brain is a tricky thing. But we can begin to address those loops using compassion.



Tip Sheet: The Three Circles

THE 3 CIRCLES COMPASSION FOCUSED THERAPY



The Three Circle Model helps us understand the functions of our emotion systems. Each emotion system is important. Depending on our motivation our emotion systems will work in different ways. This is how they can work.

THREAT (RED) CIRCLE



The threat-focused system is about protection, safety seeking, and fight/flight. Emotions connected to this system include, anger, disgust, fear, and anxiety. The Red Circle is critical for our survival. However, often we let it run the show without realising it.

DRIVE (BLUE) CIRCLE



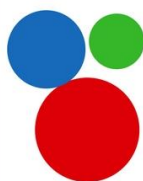
The drive system is incentive and resource-focused. It activates us to work towards things that we want, desire, or seek to achieve. Emotions connected to this circle are drive, excitement and vitality. Often we use the Blue Circle to manage our Red Circle emotions.

SOOTHING (GREEN) CIRCLE



The soothing system is about settling, grounding, non-wanting and safeness. Emotions connected to this circle include being calm and content. It helps us rest and digest and have open attention. It regenerates us.

COMPETITIVE-THREAT



When we have competitive motivation, one characterised by threat, our emotion systems will be un-balanced. Our Red Circle runs the show. We can often unknowingly be in this mind-set trying to prove our worth to ourselves and others. When in this mind-set we become self-focused and can be very fearful, critical and hostile towards ourselves and others.

COMPASSIONATE MOTIVE



Our compassionate-motive helps restore balance to our emotion systems. Helping us draw upon our wisdom, courage and commitment to be helpful to ourselves and others.

COMPASSION FOCUSED THERAPY TIP SHEET

Tip Sheet: Self-Criticism



1. What do you hope to achieve by listening to your critic?

- What does it help you do?
- What are your greatest fears if your critic was taken away?

2. Let's see if it really does help



3. What does that critic look like, what does it say?

- When you stop and really listen what does it say to you?
- What does the vocal tone sound like?
- How does it feel towards you?

4. How do you feel now?

- Does it have your best interests at heart?
- Does it help and support you when things get tough?
- Does it encourage you when you fail?



5. How would your compassionate self treat you?

- If you were at your most wise and courageous what would your compassionate-self sound like, look like, how does it feel towards you?



Tip Sheet: Compassion Under the Duvet

COMPASSION UNDER THE DUVET

Here is a short and simple 4-step process to start your day to help cultivate your compassionate best.



Breathe

Engage in Rhythm Soothing Breathing. That means keep an evenness between the in- and out-breath. Try a count of in for 4 and out for 4. Focus on the out breath keeping it smooth.



Welcome Yourself

Welcome yourself to the day like you would to a dear friend. You might like to bring a half-smile to your face and use your friendly tone. "Good morning James."



Imagine

Imagine for 1-2 minutes on how your day will look if you are at your compassionate best. How would you talk? How would you respond to others? How would you act? How would you feel?



Repeat

Try to repeat every third morning to begin with. Then slowly start to build to every second day. Then finally every day. When we welcome ourselves in this way we are giving ourselves the best chance to be at our compassionate best.