



Developing a compassionate mind



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Overview – what is compassion?

Compassion is the capacity to be sensitive to the suffering of ourselves and others and the willingness to relieve and prevent it (Paul Gilbert, 2014). It is a capacity inherent in all of us but for many reasons does not always come to flourish. Fortunately, it can be trained, developed, and deepened through practice. Compassion is characterised by kindness and receptivity as well as courage and responsibility. Many believe compassion should be directed towards others rather than ourselves but self-compassion is not selfish. Research increasingly shows that self-compassion is – like mindfulness – key to mental health and goes hand in hand with greater openness and empathy towards others.

At its heart self-compassion is about developing the ability to relate to and support ourselves well through times of difficulty and stress just as we would support a good friend or trusted colleague. Difficult thoughts and feelings arising from stressful experiences can have a significant impact on our mental health and wellbeing and the behaviours we adopt to cope with these thoughts and feelings, whilst understandable can be limiting and unhelpful in the long run.

This workbook will introduce you to reflections and practices designed to develop your ability to direct compassion, care, and support to yourself when you need it. The ideas and practices contained within are not a replacement for therapeutic support so please engage with the practices in a way that feels safe and manageable for you. Look after your own wellbeing during the course and give yourself permission to slow down and opt out of anything that feels too much for you at this time.

Reflective activity one

Setting intentions

Many people find it much easier to show compassion and care towards other people and may initially feel a little guilty or uncomfortable when being kind and supportive towards themselves. Setting an intention for the course will help keep you focused and motivated to be curious about the practices and how they might help you moving forward.

Reflect and write down a few intentions for the course and what you might gain during this time. What might it be like to bring a more caring attitude to yourself? How might you start to think and feel? What might you start to do differently?

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Think about one role in your life that feels important to you. It could be a partner, parent, carer, employee, business owner, colleague, friend. Reflect on the kind of qualities you aspire to possess in this role. How do you want to be experienced? What kind of behaviour and values do you want to model? How might developing compassion for yourself help with the above reflections?

Reflective activity two

Exploring your Fears, Blocks and Resistances

It's often helpful, as we begin our journey with being more compassionate towards ourselves to reflect on any fears, blocks, and resistances we have. As we explore these barriers, we become aware of how they get in the way at times. When we are aware of these things, we are more likely to be able to navigate them wisely.

Fears

Compassion will make me weak or vulnerable. People will take advantage of me and my compassion. Being compassionate towards myself will expose me to difficult feelings and make things worse.

Reflecting on your fears

I don't know how to be compassionate, and I don't have the time. I really don't deserve it as much as others. Being compassionate towards myself feels a little self-indulgent.

Reflecting on your blocks

[illegible]

Resistances

Compassion is stupid, foolish even It's a tough world out there, dog eat dog and complaining about how bad things are for me. It feels too much like self-pity.

[illegible]

Reflective activity three

Exploring your circles!

Take some time to reflect on the size of each of your circles, Threat, Drive and Soothe over the last few weeks and draw them out below in relation to each other. Do you notice any imbalances in size between each other? How do you know that you are operating from each circle? What does Threat, Drive and Soothe feel like for you? Make some notes within each of the circles.

Reflect on how you can change gear into Soothe system when you need it. How do you grow the *GREEN*?

- **Imagery** – What is your safe place? A place where you can go in your imagination to enjoy a sense of rest, safeness, and recharge.

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- **Memories** – reflect on a memory of a time when you felt a sense of ease and safeness, in which you felt and sense of belonging and connection with others.

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- **Music/ Smells** – what type of music or sounds helps you to feel calm and at ease? Are there any smells that help you to relax?

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- **Relationships** – Who helps you to feel safe, loved and wanted. Who helps you to be able to remain calm and centred when life is challenging? This might be another person, animal, or a spiritual figure.

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- **Other ways** to grow the green are journaling, enjoying being in nature, breathing exercises and movement practices. Reflect on some personal activities that help you feel soothed and calm

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Reflective activity four

Reflect on the learnings from the session

What have you found most helpful?

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What are the top three takeaways for the session?

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What have I learned that surprised me?

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What are a couple of things I would like to share with the group before we leave?

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How can I take this forward and explore further developing my compassionate mind?

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Further Resources

Books

The Compassionate Mind - Professor Paul Gilbert ISBN 978-1-84901-098-6

Self Compassion Kristin Neff ISBN 978-1-444-73817-9

Mindful Compassion Paul Gilbert and Choden ISBN 97-1-4721-1990-2

The Gifts of Compassion Stan Steindl ISBN 9781925644487

The Gifts of Compassion Workbook ISBN 9781925644500

Websites

About Us - Balanced Minds



On this website there are various self-compassion practices including 'Developing the compassionate self' and 'developing the compassionate other'

Self-Compassion Dr Kristin Neff

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for the everyday
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developing a compassionate mind



what we'll cover today

- welcome and introductions
- setting intentions
- what is compassion; exploring benefits
- qualities and competencies
- fears, blocks and resistances
- physiology of compassion
- flows of compassion

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guiding principles

- look after your own wellbeing
- engage with the exercises and materials in a way that feel safe and supportive for you
- step away from activities that may be overwhelming
- confidentiality matters
- keep curious, playful and open minded

imagination – reflections – discussion – learnings

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benefits: why practise self-compassion?

research shows that people who are more self-compassionate are:

happier

practising self-compassion leads to more happiness, optimism, gratitude and better relationships with others.

less stressed

self-compassion is a powerful antidote to the self-criticism and perfectionistic thinking that can lead to stress, anxiety and depression.

more resilient


self-compassionate people bounce back more easily from setbacks and are more likely to learn from their mistakes.

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A dynamic mindset or skill that can be developed Gilbert 2010, Kanov et al 2004

why is self-compassion important?

- suffering and distress are all around – how do we respond?
- managing difficult emotions and thoughts
- some behaviours can be limiting
- relationship with yourself is the longest one!
- most of us (78%) treat others better



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what is compassion?

- helpful
- caring
- kindness
- understanding
- warmth
- empathy
- non judging

- indulgent
- weak
- selfish
- letting off the hook
- wishy-washy



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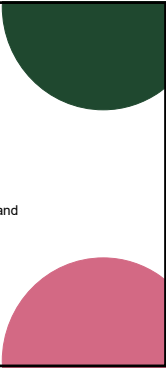
definition of compassion

the way we relate to and support ourselves and others in times of difficulty

- noticing and engaging with the difficulties and distress we experience
- finding wise and helpful ways of trying to reduce distress and prevent it returning

'the sensitivity to distress of self and others and the commitment to alleviate and prevent' - P Gilbert


Self compassion is simply compassion directed towards self



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reflective activity

how do you treat a friend?



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qualities of compassion

foundations of compassion

wisdom strength caring

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attributes of compassion

- sensitivity – an ability to notice
- sympathy
- distress tolerance
- empathy
- non-judgement
- care and commitment for wellbeing

developing competence and mastery of these attributes is important as they form the building blocks for compassionate action

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two sides of compassion

being with ourselves
comforting
soothing
validating

acting in the world
protecting
providing
motivating

compassion asks not what is wrong with me but ...

- what do I need right now?
- what might I need to hear?
- what actions might alleviate my distress
- how do I engage with this difficulty?

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exploring our fears, blocks and resistances

- weakness
- self-indulgent
- less motivated
- lazy
- selfish
- pink and fluffy

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the physiology of compassion: the 3 circle model

primary motives:

- protect, keep safe
- acquire
- care
- reproduce

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the physiology of compassion: the 3 circle model

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growing the green...

- imagery – safe place
- memories
- soothing rhythm breathing
- music, sounds, smells, touch
- relationships
- nature
- journaling
- others?

imagination is a powerful resource...

soothing system

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3 flows of compassion; social element

self → other

other → self

self → self

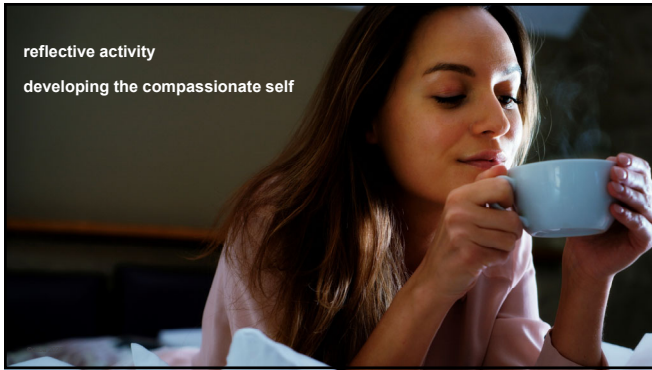
compassion flows in three directions:

- compassion for others
- receiving compassion from others
- offering compassion to ourselves, also known as self compassion

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reflective activity

developing the compassionate self



self compassion in daily life

self:

- noticing which system is running the show
- activate the soothing system when you notice distress arising
- what do I need? What would be helpful here?
- how can I engage with courage, wisdom, strength and caring intention
- build on positives and remind yourself of your abilities

others:

- how do you want to be with others?
- how do you want them to remember you?
- we all have tricky minds
- supporting and encouraging others compassionately
- keep the flows in balance

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how can caba support you?

caba provides lifelong support to past and present ICAEW members, ACA students, ICAEW staff and their close family members

- emotional support if you're struggling with stress or anxiety - our qualified counsellors can support you
- UK legal advice if you need guidance on your rights at work or advice on how to support your employees - similar support is available in several countries outside the UK, but not all, so please get in touch to find out more
- debt advice if you need help to minimise your UK debts and manage your finances - If your debt is outside of the UK it is still worth contacting us as we might have other services to support you in your particular circumstances
- financial assistance if you're facing redundancy or loss of income
- wellbeing resources such as videos, articles and guides to help you and your family
- live online courses to help you build confidence and achieve your goals

visit caba.org.uk or email enquiries@caba.org.uk

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feedback

here at caba, we're always interested to know what you think about our services.
your views help our team to learn and improve.
tell us about the service you received in this short 5-minute survey.
all responses are anonymous, strictly confidential and won't affect the service you receive from us.

a link to the survey is in the chat box

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