

COMPASSION TECHNIQUES FOR MANAGING
NEGATIVE PSYCHOLOGICAL
CONSEQUENCES OF PUBLIC REGISTRATION



PARSOL Conference
November 15, 2024
Harrisburg, PA
Theresa Robertson, Ph.D., LCPC

1

COMPASSION



"The more different we feel from others, the more important compassion becomes." ~Dennis Tirch~

2

AGENDA

- Compassion: What it is not & what it is
- Tricky Brain
- Compassionate Mind: How to get there
- Brief summary of study results
- Resources

3

COMPASSION: WHAT IT IS **NOT**



Image source: pixabay.com

4

COMPASSION: WHAT IT IS **NOT**



Image source: pixabay.com

5

COMPASSION: WHAT IT IS **NOT**



Image source: pixabay.com

6

DIFFERENTIATING
COMPASSION FROM EMPATHY

- Compassion & empathy have distinctly different effects on the human brain, emotions, and behavior
- After short-term empathy training negative affect increased
- After short-term compassion training negative affect returned to baseline and positive affect increased
- Short-term compassion training increased prosocial behavior

(Klimecki, 2015; Leberg, Klimecki, & Singer, 2011)

7

COMPASSION: WHAT IS IT?



Image source: picabay.com

8

COMPASSION

“A sensitivity to suffering in self and others with a commitment to try to alleviate and prevent it.”

(Gilbert, 2017, p. 11)

9

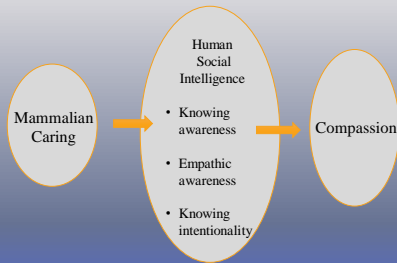
COMPASSION

Three flows of compassion

- Offering compassion to others
- Receiving compassion from others
- Self-compassion

10

Evolution: From caring to compassion



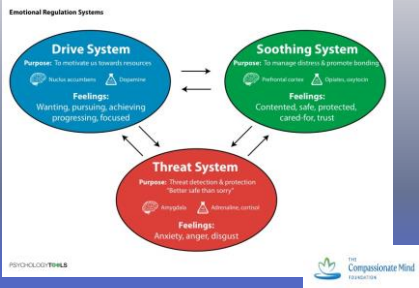
11

SHAPED BY FACTORS WE HAD LITTLE TO DO WITH

- > **We just find ourselves here** with emotions and a socially made sense of self that we did not choose, but have to figure out how to manage
- > The human brain has evolved over millions of years
- > Each of our brains develop uniquely based on
 - > Genetics
 - > Early childhood experiences
 - > Family
 - > Social environment
 - > Lived experiences/events
- > Much of what goes on in our minds is not of our design and **not our fault** but it is our responsibility to learn to manage our lives in helpful and compassionate ways.

12

THREE-CIRCLE MODEL



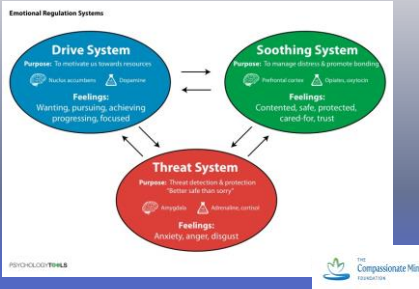
13

TRICKY BRAIN



14

SO WHAT CAN WE DO?



15

EMOTION REGULATION
PRE AND POST COMPASSION TRAINING

THERESA: PRE-CMT

THERESA: POST-CMT

Compassion Practice

16

BUILDING CAPACITY FOR
COMPASSION

Slow down!



Image source: pixabay.com

17

BUILDING CAPACITY FOR
COMPASSION

Trick your Tricky Brain

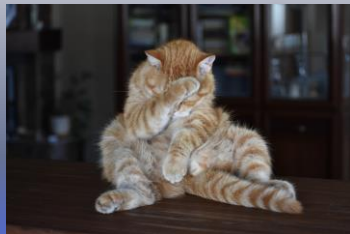
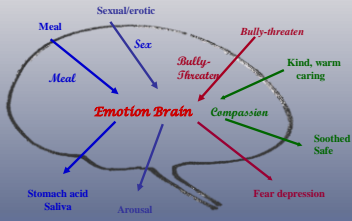


Image source: pixabay.com

18

BRAIN & BODY RESPONDS TO OUR OWN INTERNAL CREATIONS



19

BUILDING CAPACITY FOR COMPASSION

Memory and Imagery Exercises

Safe Place (Imagery)

Compassion flowing-in (Memory)

Compassion flowing-out

Self-compassion

Developing the compassionate self

Developing our compassionate ideal other

20

BUILDING CAPACITY FOR COMPASSION

- Engage our compassionate mind
- Identify your motivation for writing the letter
- Begin the letter and identify the difficulty
- Offer yourself validation and empathy
- Acknowledge your attempts to manage your threat-system, remembering, having this tricky brain is not your fault!
- Take responsibility for committing to manage the difficulties in a more helpful way



21

STUDY RESULTS

N = 30
 8-week CFT group therapy intervention
 2 hour sessions
 Weekly compassion practice homework
 Weekly compassion practice diary

Week	Topic
1	Introduction to Mindfulness and Compassion-Focused Therapy
2	Understanding Our Emotions
3	New Brain/Old Brain and Shame-Based Threat Responses
4	Compassionate Approach for Working with Self-Criticism and Difficult Emotions
5	Barriers to Compassion & Developing the Compassionate Self
6	Attributes of Compassion and Skills of Compassion – Compassionate Attention
7	Skills of Compassion – Compassionate Thinking & Compassionate Behavior
8	Compassionate Letter Writing and Extending Compassion to Others

22

RESULTS: ONE-WAY MULTIVARIATE REPEATED MEASURES CFT TREATMENT EFFECTS

- Significant treatment effects:
 - Shame
 - Stress
 - Self-Compassion
 - Spirituality
 - Prayer Fulfillment
 - Universality
 - Connectedness

23

RESULTS: HIERARCHICAL MULTIPLE REGRESSION COMPASSION, SELF-COMPASSION, AND SPIRITUALITY CHANGE SCORES AS PREDICTORS OF OUTCOMES

- Changes in self-compassion predicted significant changes in levels of
 - Shame – Negative direction
 - Depression – Negative direction
 - Hopelessness – Negative direction
- Changes in levels of Religious Crisis predicted changes in levels of
 - Anxiety – Positive direction

24

RESULTS: HIERARCHICAL MULTIPLE REGRESSION
ENGAGEMENT IN COMPASSION PRACTICE AS A
PREDICTOR OF IMPROVED OUTCOMES

➤ Engagement in compassion practice predicted change in:

- Self-compassion – Positive direction
- Shame – Negative direction
- Stress – Negative direction

25

CFT & COMPASSION-BASED RESOURCES

Books

Gilbert, P. (2009). *The compassionate mind*. Oakland, CA: New Harbinger.

Gilbert, P. & Chodon (2014). *Mindful compassion*. Oakland, CA: New Harbinger.

Irons, CI, Beaumont, E. (2018). *The compassionate mind workbook: A step-by-step guide to developing your compassionate self*.

Kolts, R. L., (2016). *CFT made simple*. Oakland, CA: New Harbinger.

Kolts, R. L., Bell, T., Bennett-Levy, J., & Irons, C. (2018). *Experiencing compassion-focused therapy from the inside out: A self-practice/self-reflection workbook for therapists*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.

26

CFT & COMPASSION-BASED RESOURCES

Websites

Compassionate Mind Foundation, UK
<https://compassionatemind.co.uk/resources>

Compassionate Mind Foundation, USA
<http://www.compassionfocusedtherapy.com>

Self-Compassion
Self-compassion.org

27

COMPASSION IT!