

## Cultivating Self-Compassion

### What is Compassion?

“the recognition and clear seeing of suffering...feelings of kindness for people who are suffering, so that the desire to help – to ameliorate suffering – emerges... recognizing our shared human condition, flawed and fragile as it is” - Neff (2011)

“a basic kindness, with a deep awareness of the suffering of other living things, coupled with the wish and effort to relieve it” - Gilbert (2009)

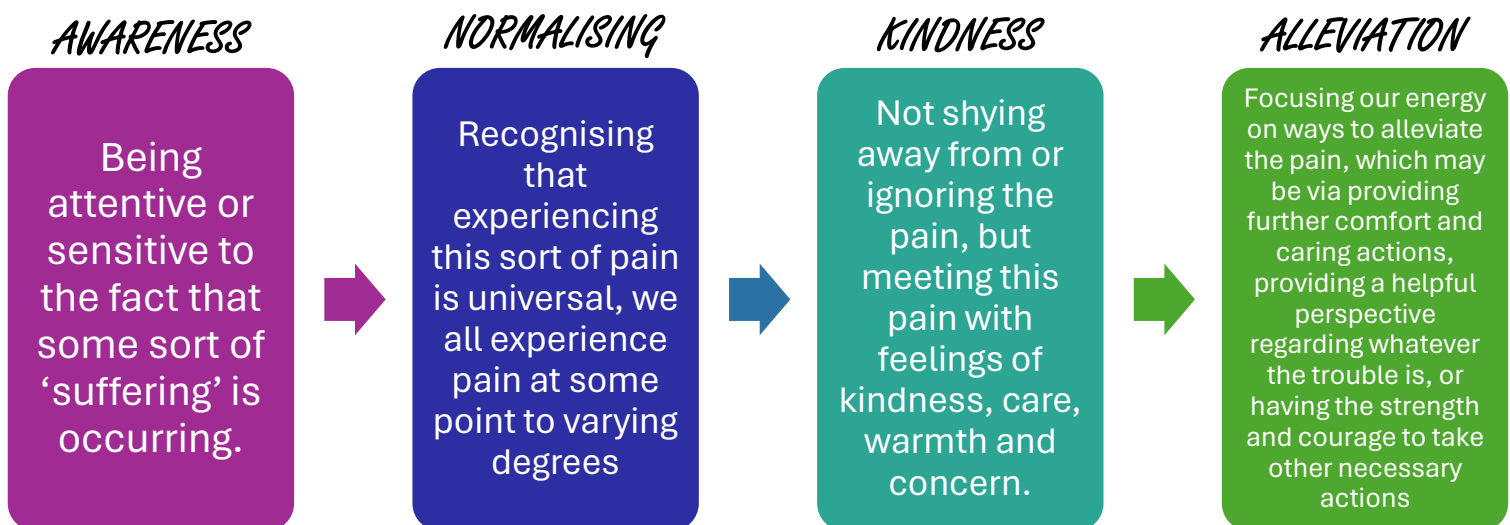


### Key academics:

Dr. Kristin Neff – Pioneering researcher and teacher of self-compassion.

Paul Gilbert – Clinical Psychologist and founder of Compassion-Focused Therapy.

### The 4 Component of Compassion



## What is Self-Compassion?

“Self-compassion has been defined as being open to and non-avoidant of one’s experiences, being caring towards and non-judgmental of oneself, particularly in times of distress, and recognizing that experiences of oneself as inadequate are intrinsic to the human experience” – Neff (2003)

### 2 Psychologies - Paul Gilbert

1. To approach, understand and engage with suffering
2. To work to alleviate and prevent suffering by nurturing

### 3 Doorways In – Kristin Neff

There are three distinct doorways into Self-Compassion, so whenever you are in pain, you have 3 potential courses of action:

1. Self-Kindness
2. Common Humanity
3. Mindfulness



## Self-Kindness

Self-Kindness means that we stop constant self-judgement and negative internal commentary.

But it involves more than merely stopping self-judgement, it involves comforting ourselves, responding just as we would with others, but too ourselves!



However! Western Culture places great emphasis on being kind to others; our friends, family, colleagues when they are struggling. But not when it comes out ourselves.

## Multi-minds

We must acknowledge that we have different layers of 'self'.

And we must show compassion to each layer of yourself in a different way.

However! By fulfilling one mind, we are going to upset the others..



But we must:

- Learn to accept that our brain is a puzzle
- There may be no total solution
- Unease is inevitable so we must be mindful and accept the unease

“Much of what goes on in our multi-minds is not our fault. But it is our responsibility.

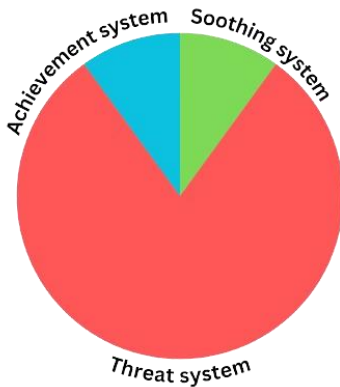
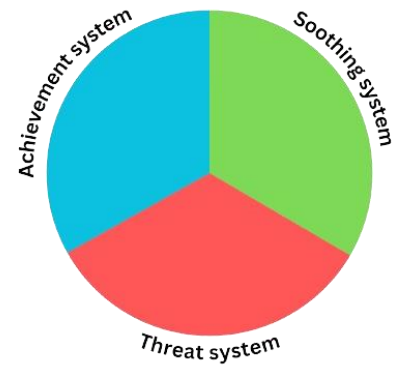
Key to understanding this is to recognise that we are not blaming ourselves for our minds, but we are taking responsibility for understanding them.”

*Paul Gilbert*

### 3 Systems of Regulation

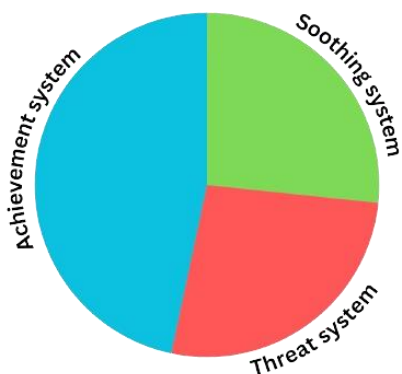
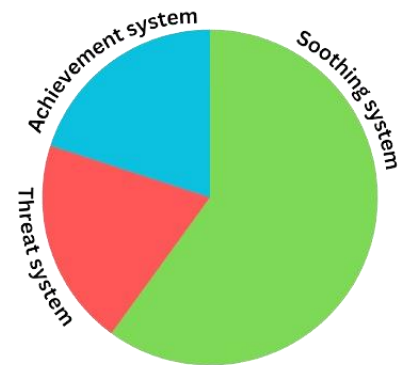
There are 3 systems of emotion regulation – all are naturally balanced and support each other.

They sometimes live in harmony BUT other times they can be in conflict.



When our threat system is overactive, it pushes the other systems out of action! This is where our emotional brain may take charge and we can go into survival mode.

The best way to shrink our threat system is to boost our soothing system!



You can also boost your achieving system to receive the same effect, but mindful that your achieving system can dysregulate at times which can trigger the threat system (i.e. if goals are not reached or met this can produce strong feelings of anxiety, frustration or anger).

But what does balance look like for you?

## Tricky Brains

Another element of Paul Gilbert's Compassion Focused Therapy is Accepting and Adapting your tricky brain!

“It's not our fault we've got tricky brains!”

We need to:

### Accept

- Accept that distress will come, but know that there are ways to lessen it.
- Accept that our brains are tricky and that there is a lot going on, and a lot of minds around the table.
- Accept that "our brains did not evolve for happiness, but for survival and reproduction"

### Adapt

- Most people can accept that their brains are tricky, but they want to something about it!
- Tip 1: Stand back and become more observant of your thoughts and feelings as they arise
- Tip 2: Activate your soothing system to support the compassion towards self

## Problem Solving vs Soothing

When we think about supporting others and ourselves, we can often rush to problem solve and fix things, rather than truly understanding how others/ourselves are feeling.

We need to think about moving away from being a 'sorter', to a 'soother', or a balance of the two.



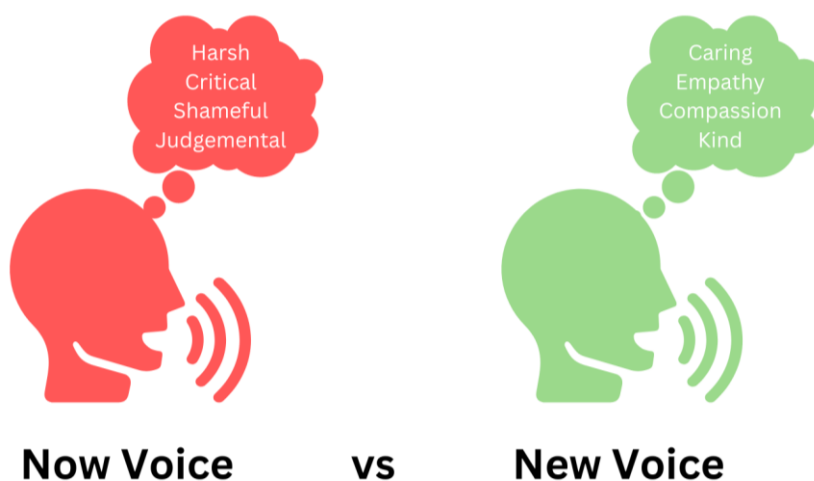
Sorter = What are we going to do about it? Attitude

Soother = Focus on supporting whether the problem is resolved or not!

## Now Voice vs New Voice

Self-Compassion is often about your inner voice, and many of us have a really critical, harsh and shameful inner voice.

Giving yourself advice and guidance is good, but exactly how you do it is crucial!



### **Self-attacking Voice**

- Focuses on condemning and punishing.
- Is backward looking.
- Is given with anger, frustration, disappointment.
- Focuses on fear of failure.
- Increases avoidance and withdrawal.



### **Self-Compassion Voice**

- Focuses on desire to improve.
- Is forward looking.
- Is given with encouragement, support, kindness.
- Focuses on hopes for success.
- Increases chance of engagement



### **Objective Self-Criticism**

The balance in-between

Objective Self-Criticism is the balance in-between a self-compassionate voice, and a self-attacking voice.

This allows us to consider that we don't always want to be so far into the self-compassionate voice that we don't make any constructive change or move forward.

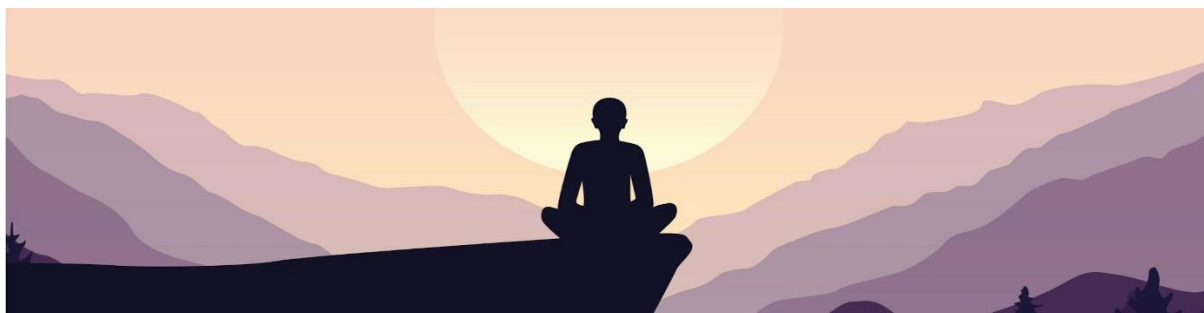
## Mindfulness

We need to recognise that there is a difference between being mindful and practicing mindfulness.

*Mindful* - describes the resulting state of being attentive and conscious in the present moment.

*Mindfulness* - refers to the broader concept and practice of cultivating present-moment awareness.

Mindful activities are a good start i.e. eating mindfully, walking mindfully, colouring mindfully - but making mindfulness part of your routine is more beneficial.



## Boosting the soothing system

Paul Gilbert poses 10 interventions to boost the soothing system, however most of these require an element of Mindfulness to complete them.



# Mindfulness techniques

“Mindfulness teaches people to pay attention to their inner voice and external worlds with curiosity, kindness and no judgement” – Paul Gilbert

Things to try:

1. Practice being present.

### How to Do a Body Scan Meditation

Get comfortable

Close your eyes & focus on your breath

Bring awareness to a specific part of your body

Spend 20-60 seconds noticing sensations

Imagine tension decreasing with each breath

Release your focus on that part of your body

Move to the next part of your body and continue

Release your focus & come back to your surroundings

After several scans, let your awareness travel across your whole body

If your thoughts wander, gently bring your awareness back

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### 5 tips to MINDFULNESS

**TIP 01 MINDFUL BREATHING**  
Focus solely on your breath for a few minutes!

**TIP 02 MINDFUL EATING**  
Pay close attention to the smells, flavours, and textures of your food

**TIP 03 WALKING MEDITATION**  
A 10-minute mindful walk connecting with the present moment and observing the world around you!

**TIP 04 BODY SCAN**  
Scan your body from head to toe to tune into the physical sensations

**TIP 05 MINDFUL ACTIVITY**  
Try yoga, puzzles, colouring or craft

### Grounding Techniques

@bejsschminded

(Helpful tools to create a sense of safety & grounding to the present)

**Senses**  
None  
5 things you can see  
4 things you can hear  
3 things you can smell  
2 things you can touch  
1 thing you can taste

**Re-orient**  
"I am..."  
"The date is..."  
"I am currently at..."  
"I am safe"

**Physical**  
Slow & deepen breathing  
Clench & relax your fists  
Press your feet into the floor  
Stretch

**Mental**  
Play a calculator  
Juggle (if you can)  
Imagine a safe & calming place  
Count backwards

**Soothe**  
Offer yourself words of kindness:  
"Gentle" "I'm not alone"  
"This will pass"

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2. Catching your thoughts.

### HOW TO START MEDITATING

**BREATH**  
Don't try to "calm your mind." Instead, appreciate the sensations of your breath in the same way that a wine snob tastes a cabernet. When your mind starts wandering away into thoughts, just recognize that you're thinking. Then return to appreciating the sensations of your breath.

**ARMS/HANDS**  
Relax your shoulders and arms, letting your hands rest on your thighs. Alternately, place one hand on another in your lap.

**LEGS/FEET**  
If you're sitting in a chair, keep your feet flat on the floor and your spine straight. If you're sitting cross-legged on a cushion, the important thing is to have your knees below your hips. If you need a higher seat, make one.

**EMOTIONS**  
Long-term meditators show increased size in brain regions associated with emotional regulation. "Larger volumes in these regions might account for meditators' singular abilities and habits to cultivate positive emotions, retain emotional stability, and engage in mindful behavior," according to a UCLA study.

**EYES**  
Decide what you're going to do with your eyes. If you want the experience to be more body-based, close them. If you want to feel more anchored in the space you're in, keep them open.

**TIME**  
Meditation isn't about length; it's about frequency. In the same way you don't get strong by lifting one giant weight one time, you should try and sit regularly. Five or ten minutes a day is a great start.

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### DAILY Reflection

EMOTIONAL CHECK IN: ☺ ☹ ☹

GOALS IN PROGRESS

THESE THINGS WENT WELL TODAY:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

NOTES:

THESE THINGS DID NOT GO WELL TODAY:

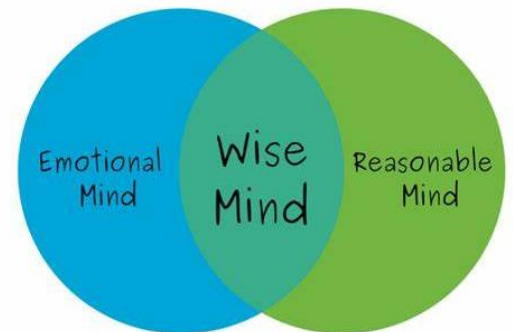
- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

NOTES:

HOW CAN I IMPROVE FOR TOMORROW?

NOTES:

"LEARN FROM TODAY, FOR A BETTER TOMORROW." - ROBERT WALLACE



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### 3. Observing your thoughts as just thoughts!



**RAISE**  
MERSEYSIDE  
YOUTH  
ASSOCIATION

## A.P.P.L.E.

#### A Mindful Response to Thoughts

**A**cknowledge  
Notice and acknowledge the thought as it comes to mind.

**P**ause  
Don't react as you normally do. Just pause and breathe.

**P**ull Back  
Tell yourself that this is just your thoughts or feelings talking, and that it is only a thought or feeling  
Don't believe everything you think! Thoughts are not statements or facts.

**L**et Go  
Let go of the thought or feeling. It will pass. You don't have to respond to it. Image them floating away.

**E**xplore  
Explore the present moment. Notice your breathing. Notice the ground beneath you. What can you see, hear, touch, smell? Focus on the right now.  
Then shift your focus of attention to something else - what you need to do, what you were doing before, or something new - with you full attention.

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**RAISE**  
MERSEYSIDE  
YOUTH  
ASSOCIATION

# STOPP

#### A mindful practice to defuse intense emotions and thoughts in the moment

**Stop!**  
Interrupt your thoughts with the command 'stop!'  
Just pause for a moment.  
Say it to yourself, out loud or in your head as soon as you notice your mind and/or body is reacting to a trigger.



**Take a Breath**  
Take slow deep breaths.  
In through the nose - hold it - out through the mouth.



**Observe**  
Notice your thoughts, feelings, physical sensations.

- What am I thinking about?
- Where is my focus of attention?
- What am I reacting to?
- What am I feeling in my body?



**Pull Back - Put in some Perspective**  
What's the bigger picture? Take a helicopter view.  
Is there another way of looking at this situation?  
What advice would I give to a friend? What would they say to me right now?  
How important is this right now? What about in 6 months time?



**Practise what works - then Proceed**  
What is the BEST thing to do right now?  
What is the most helpful thing for me, others, the situation?  
Do I have to act now? Could I wait and see...  
Where can I focus my attention right now?  
What other skills can I use?



## Common Humanity

“Although self-acceptance and self-love are important, they are incomplete by themselves. They leave out an essential factor—other people.”

“Seeing one’s experiences as part of the larger human experience rather than seeing them as separating and isolating”

“Self-compassion entails seeing one’s own experience in light of the common human experience, acknowledging that suffering, failure, and inadequacies are part of the human condition, and that all people—oneself included—are worthy of compassion.”



### How can we understand it?

*Just Like Me...*

Think of 5 people who really annoyed you recently, or made you feel upset / angry, or you don’t get on with them much.

Then do the following:

- Think of each individual,
- Use your Wise Mind,
- Find a common ground with that person.

Say to yourself: *Just like me they...*

Feel into the common humanity you share with this person and how the two of you are similar.

Even if their actions don't take your perspective into account, even if you don't agree with how this person expressed their needs, can you sense that they just want what all of us humans want: to be happy, valued, respected, loved, secure, at ease?