

**Compassion**

Exercise



10-15 min.



Client



No



Compassion-based Motivation

Many clients believe that a harsh, critical voice is needed in order to mobilize sufficient motivation. It is a common-held misconception that self-compassion equals self-pity. Clients may believe that self-compassion can cause inactivity, passivity, a lack of motivation or self-indulgence. Research findings suggest that this is not the case. Self-compassion is associated with greater personal initiative to make needed changes in one's life (Neff, Rude, & Kirkpatrick, 2007). Self-compassion is also positively associated with mastery goals and negatively associated with performance goals (Neff et al, 2005). Moreover, women with higher levels of self-compassion have greater intrinsic rather than extrinsic motivation to work-out (Magnus, 2007). This exercise can help clients become aware that self-motivation can be achieved in a compassionate way.

Goal

The goal of this exercise is threefold. First, the exercise can help clients become aware of how they may use self-criticism to motivate themselves. Second, the exercise offers a new perspective on self-motivation that is characterized by more compassion and support. Third, it offers a concrete way of implementing compassion-based motivation.



Advice

The goal of this exercise is not to create a black and white approach to motivation where compassion is considered "good" and self-criticism is seen as "bad". Rather, the goal is to make people aware of how they feel when they use self-criticism to motivate themselves. A consequence of this exercise may be that the client's beliefs about the value of self-criticism for motivation are challenged. The client may come to realise that there are different, less self-attacking ways to enhance motivation. However, it is more powerful when a client experiences this for him/herself, rather than when a practitioner conveys this idea.



Suggested Readings

Neff, K. D. (2011). *Self-compassion: Stop beating yourself up and leave insecurity behind*. New York: William Morrow.



Compassion-based Motivation

Instructions

Remember a time when you have used self-criticism in hopes of finding motivation.

1. What personal characteristics did you criticize in the hopes of realizing positive change? Write down what these personal characteristics might be.

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2. How do you feel when you are using self-criticism to motivate yourself? Use the space below to describe how you feel.

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3. Now, come up with a gentler or kinder method of self-motivation. How could you produce motivation for yourself in the same way that a loving parent, kind peer or caring mentor might use to guide you? Write down some possible ways to motivate yourself in a more kind and self-compassionate way.

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4. How would that message effectively identify unproductive behaviour while still carrying a positive or encouraging tone? Write down a supportive message that most aligns with your personal goals.

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From now on, when you realize you are being self-critical, first identify the pain you are inflicting. Then, try to feel compassionate. Try to refrain from negative self-criticism in favour of encouraging or supportive language. Love and support are much more powerful motivators than negativity and fear.