

**Compassion**

Intervention



5-10 min. daily



Client



No



Training Self-Compassionate Thoughts and Behaviour

Am I thinking helpful and kind thoughts? Am I being triggered? If I am feeling a negative emotion, can I accept what I am feeling in the present moment? These three questions should be considered when focusing on self-compassion. Very often, we are much harder on ourselves than we are on our friends, family, colleagues, etc. In reality, we know what we want and can be our own guidance and support. With patience, persistence, and practice, we can be just as kind, gentle, and considerate to ourselves as we are to others. The best way to start is by training self-compassion on a daily basis. This tool was designed to both increase awareness of self-critical thoughts and replace negative patterns of thinking and behaviour with more positive, self-compassionate ones.

Goal

The goal of this intervention is to increase daily awareness of self-critical thoughts and promote thoughts and behaviour that reflect a more compassionate relationship with the self. In addition, the examples of compassionate behaviour that are generated by the client offer a great starting point for starting a behavioural intervention to address issues in a self-compassionate way.



Advice

It can be helpful for clients to receive some examples of a completed form before they start with the intervention. You may use the examples used in this tool for this purpose.

For many clients, having their thoughts on paper can be a confrontational experience. In fact, taking a look at the thoughts that are written is a form of self-observation, or, in mindfulness terms, decentering: looking at the content of thoughts from the perspective of an observer. Ask clients to use the scheme included with this exercise and bring it to the next session. During that next session, take a close look at the scheme and discuss the experiences with the client: What does it feel like to look at your thoughts and experiences as listed here? How was it to complete the scheme? What do you notice when you take a look at the scheme? What did you learn from this exercise? Etc.

If a client finds it too much work or too difficult to construct compassionate thoughts and behaviour, suggest that you save this part of the exercise for the next session, when you can do it together.



Suggested Readings

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

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Instructions

This week, try to become aware of your self-critical thoughts as much as possible. When you notice a self-critical thought, see if you can register the thought using the table on the next page. Alternatively, you may record the thought using your phone or a different piece of paper. Next, ask yourself: what kind of thoughts would reflect more self-compassion? What would a good friend, who loves you unconditionally, say to you? Record these thoughts as well. Finally, think of what could be more compassionate behaviour. What can you do to address the issue that is reflected by the self-critical thoughts? Make sure that the behaviour is characterised by self-care and compassion, not self-disapproval or criticism. The table below illustrates the idea of this exercise.

Self-Critical Thoughts	Compassionate Thoughts	Compassionate Behaviour
I am chubby.	It has been hard for me lately and it's okay to feel this way.	Taking action to stick to a gym schedule.
I look horrible in pictures.	I intend to be happy.	Find a buddy who has a similar goal and work on your goals together.
I should be ashamed of myself.	I see eating as a stress reliever. That's okay, but maybe I could think of a better strategy.	Smiling at yourself when you look in the mirror.
No one will ever love me because of how I look.	I am beautiful just the way I am; I am deserving of love.	Hiring a physical trainer at your local gym.
I hate when I look in the mirror.	It's okay to get help; who can I go to seek help?	Visiting a professional.



Self-Critical Thoughts	Compassionate Thoughts	Compassionate Behaviour