

**Compassion**

Exercise



8-12 min.



Client



No



Visualising a Compassionate Self

Self-compassion is not a word that many clients use on a daily basis. It is a concept that needs explaining. Even when the idea behind the concept is clear, it can be still very useful to make the concept more personal. What does it feel like when the client is self-compassionate? Which qualities are already present that make up a self-compassionate attitude?

Goal

The goal of the exercise is to make the image of a compassionate self more concrete. The exercise can help clients relate to what it feels like to be self-compassionate and live more in line with this notion.



Advice

Before starting the exercise, it is important to explain to clients that the point of the exercise is not to identify what compassionate qualities the clients possess or lack. The exercise is merely supposed to help your client envision and understand what those qualities might look or feel like. More importantly, clients should realize that they are capable of acting in a compassionate fashion. They may even begin to understand how compassionate behaviour may positively influence the people around them, while encouraging their own personal growth.

The practitioner can guide the visualisation process. It can also help to start with a brief sitting meditation. Often, clients find it easier to visualise with their eyes closed. They can also take the exercise home to practice the visualisation on a regular basis.



Suggested Readings

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



Visualising a Compassionate Self

Instructions

Think of the most meaningful qualities of a compassionate individual. Here are some essential qualities:

1. Genuine wisdom and maturity
2. Strength
3. Warmth and kindness
4. An aversion to casting judgment
5. Responsibility
6. Desire for positive change

Imagine yourself when your behaviour is informed by these qualities. Imagine you are growing in wisdom and maturity. Sit quietly while concentrating on your breath. Once sufficiently relaxed or calm, imagine yourself as a supremely compassionate person. Imagine all of your characteristics, your attitude and your behaviour.

To guide your imagination, try focusing on a few specific facets of compassion:

- You are calm and wise
- You are sensitive
- You are capable of tolerating and thriving even in times of hardship
- You are warm and kind
- You enjoy being helpful and you want to relieve suffering

Use your posture and facial expression to reflect an attitude of compassion:

- Pay attention to your body
- Feel the warmth and expansion in your body
- Think about how fulfilling it feels to be kind