



Wellbeing with Fatigue

Booklet for Participants

Session 11: Perfectionism and Introducing Compassion.

steps2wellbeing
Southampton & Dorset

Action Plan

- Home Practice review
- Perfectionism
- Introducing compassion
- Home Practice

Questions?

Do you have any questions from last week's session?



Home Practice Review

How did your home practice go? Did you achieve your goals?

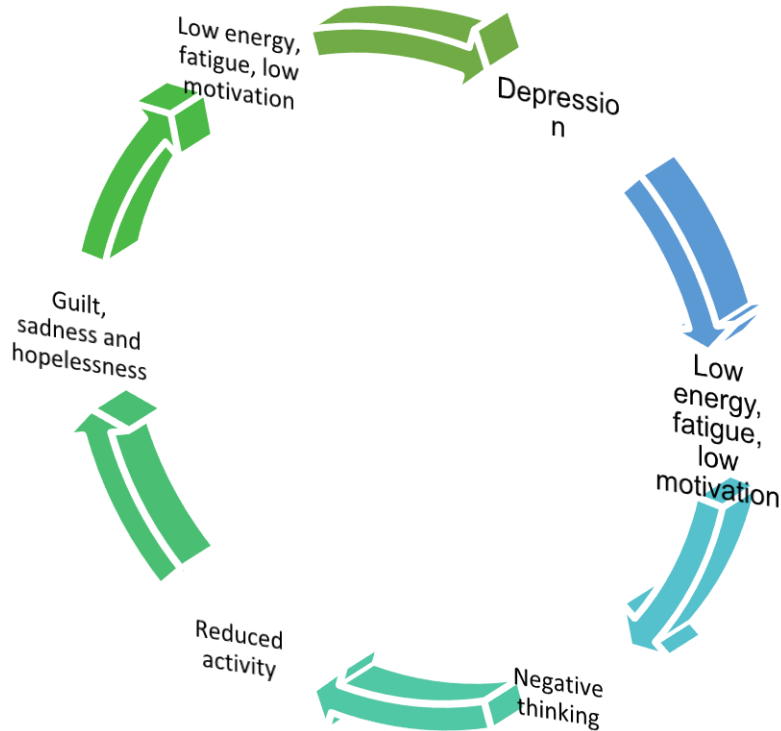
What did you learn from your home practice?

An artistic illustration at the top of the page shows several hands of different colors (white, black, brown) reaching out to hold a red heart. In the background, two small figures are walking on a path. The word "Perfectionism" is written in bold black text over the hands.

Perfectionism

A brief note about perfectionism

Perfectionism is worrying about new things and fearing will not excel, being overly self-critical, attempting to complete a task in one go, focusing on things that we haven't achieved, struggling to relax as we "should" be doing something, doubting your own judgment.



The link between perfectionism, fatigue and boom-and-bust cycles

Interestingly, there are some studies showing that people with chronic pain and chronic fatigue issues are more likely to be perfectionists. Research isn't clear on the link between the two (on what causes what). However, it can be helpful to consider how perfectionist tendencies might influence our boom and bust cycle.

Have a think - what thoughts or feelings trigger boom-bust cycles for you. Is there a link with perfectionist tendencies?

Perfectionism 'active' behaviours

Most perfectionists engage in actions aimed at reaching the unrelenting standards they have set for themselves, they may work so hard to achieve their high standards that they engage in behaviours others might see as unnecessary or even excessive. Examples:

- ◇ Excessive checking
- ◇ Excessive organising
- ◇ List making
- ◇ Correcting others

Perfectionism 'avoid' behaviours

We may also try to meet the unrelenting standards and avoid 'failure' by avoiding doing tasks. Although this may not seem like perfectionism, it is really the other side of the same coin. When perfectionists fear that they will not be able to reach their high standards, they may be too afraid of failure to try. Examples include:

- ◇ Giving up too soon
- ◇ Procrastinating or putting off until the last minute
- ◇ Indecisiveness
- ◇ Avoiding tasks you fear you are unable to do adequately

So what can help?

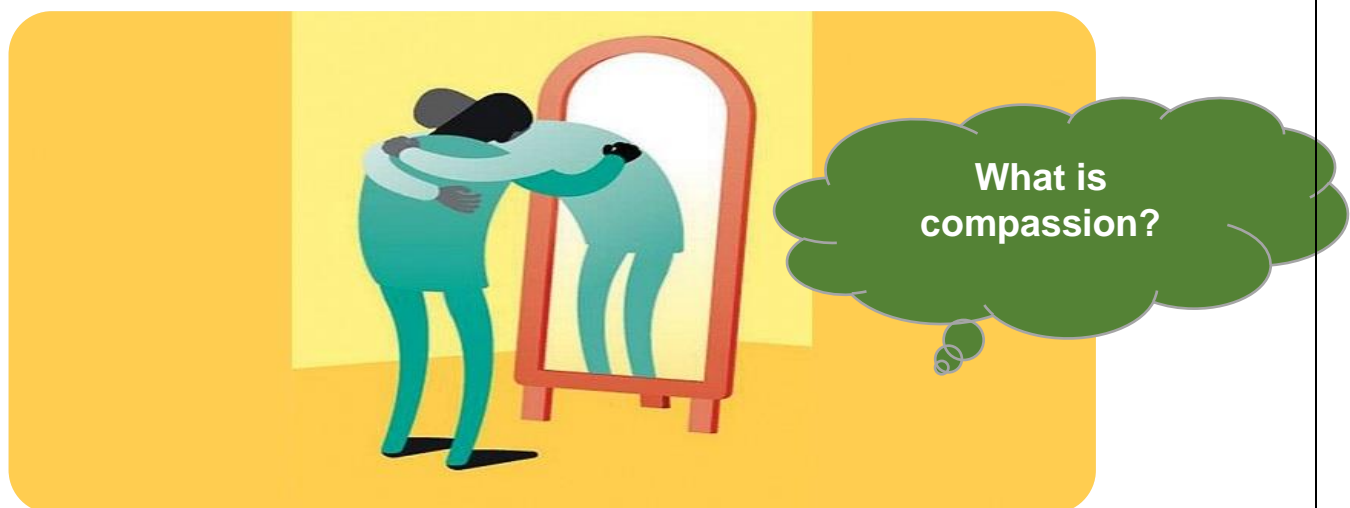
- **Writing down 3 achievements from each day**
- **Include fun activities within your day's activities rather than just tasks**
- **Try a new hobby**
- **Start to reduce checking and list making**
- **Chunking goals**



Compassion

Why compassion matters? Because Life is Hard!

Being diagnosed with a long term condition that causes fatigue can bring many challenges, e.g. extreme fatigue, sleep problems, dealings with healthcare system, a loss of a job, financial difficulties, just to name a few. This new reality is a process that requires us to accept, and cope with the condition as well as form a new identity. While some people with long term conditions experience positive changes, e.g. posttraumatic growth, generally many are at an increased risk of developing mental health problems which in turn can hinder adjustment to the condition and increase symptom burden. Compassion and self-compassion can help people accept and cope with the challenges of a long-term physical condition.



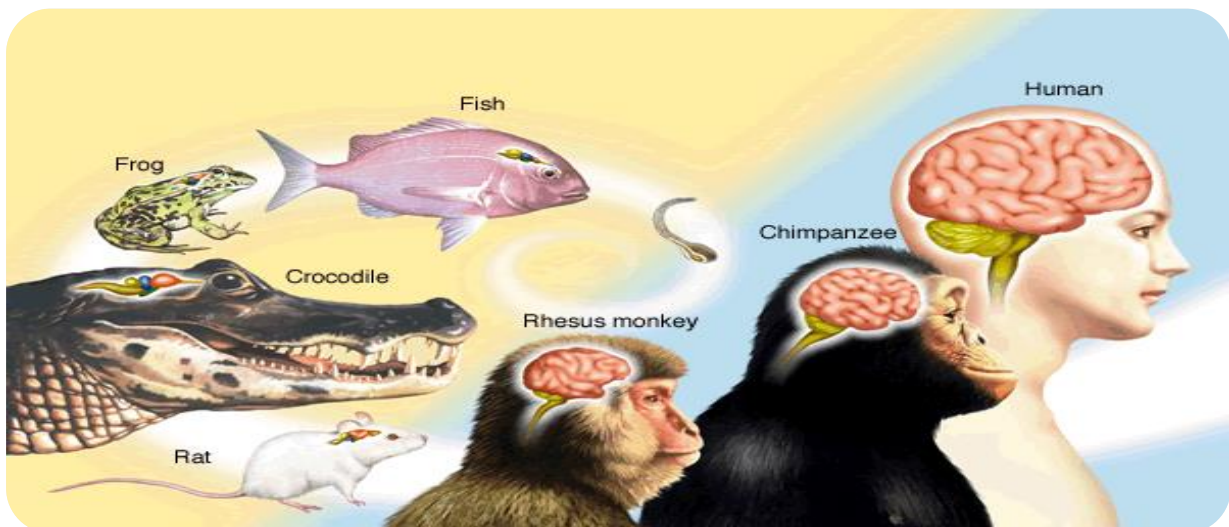
**‘Compassion is “a sensitivity to suffering in self and others with a commitment to try to alleviate and prevent it”
Paul Gilbert**

In other words compassion encompasses the acknowledgment that all humans go through difficult experiences and entails attending to those experiences with kindness and caring action.

Various research show that compassion to ourselves, or self-compassion, is associated with lower distress and higher health-related quality of life, adaptive coping, emotion-regulation, reduced feelings of shame, health-promoting behaviours, seeking social support and treatment adherence.

Developing self-compassion part 1

Compassion begins with a reality check. We are gene-built – with evolved brains designed to struggle to survive, to want, grasp and avoid pain. Life involves dealing with tragedies and people do the best that they can. Much of what goes in our mind is not of 'our design' and **not our fault**.



The human brain is the product of million years of evolution a process of conserving, modifying and adapting.

Developing self-compassion

The way we think about and treat ourselves is a major cause of suffering to ourselves - the West is riddled with people who feel inferior, inadequate self-critical or even self-hating. The good news is that we can learn to become kinder and more compassionate to ourselves by practicing simple, yet effective exercises.

Exercise 1: Self- Compassionate Break

To begin, bring to mind a situation in your life that is causing you stress or pain. Think about this situation and how it makes you feel, both emotionally and physically.

When you have this situation in mind and get in touch with the feelings associated with it, say the following things to yourself:

- “This is a moment of suffering.”
This will activate **mindfulness**; other options include “This hurts,” “This is stress,” and, simply, “Ouch.”
- “Suffering is a part of life.”
Saying this helps you realize that you have this in common with all other human beings on the planet – suffering is an unavoidable part of life. You can follow this up by putting your hands over your heart or using whatever soothing self-touch feels right to you. Other options include “Other people feel this way,” “I’m not alone,” or “We all struggle in our lives.”
- “May I be kind to myself.”
Alternatively, you can use other phrases that may apply better in your current situation, such as “May I forgive myself” or “May I be patient.”

Great relief can come from simply affirming that you are experiencing suffering, a difficult but natural part of life, and stating your intention to be kind, patient, or accepting of yourself.



Over to You: Choose and Practice

Summary Session Eleven

Key themes in session nine were about understanding perfectionism and how it affects you and your management of fatigue. We discussed rumination and a strategy that can help us reduce the duration (and later the frequency) of this negative thinking pattern. We also started to look at the importance of compassion in our healing.

Write down one or more key points that you have learnt today:

Suggested Home Practice

You may find useful to read this handbook, reflect upon your thoughts and the psychological techniques discussed.

Practise reducing perfectionism behaviours

When you experience a difficulty in this week, consider practicing the Compassionate Break exercise and notice your thoughts and feelings after the practice.

Try to identify rumination and use the 5 Minute Rule to challenge it.