Developing Compassionate Resilience In Women Who Have Been Hurt And Harmed By Others

Using Compassion Focused Therapy To Work With Shame And Self Loathing

Dr Deborah Lee
Consultant Clinical Psychologist
Head of Berkshire Traumatic Stress and Veterans Services

Leicester keynote Dr Deborah Lee, 2019
Thanks to colleagues

Compassionate Mind Foundation

www.compassionatemind.co.uk

Berkshire Traumatic Stress Service

www.BHFT.nhs.uk

York UKPTS keynote Dr Deborah Lee, 2019
Complex PTSD Team
Veterans’ Team
Treatment of PTSD

- ‘Understanding PTSD’
- Compassionate resilience
- Developing trauma stories (TF-CBT/EMDR/NET)
- Reclaiming life

Recovery
Interpersonal Trauma, C-PTSD and Compassion
Hurt and harmed at the hands of others

- Rape
- Terrorist attacks
- Acid attacks
- Stalking
- Childhood Sexual abuse
- Extreme bullying
- Emotional physical abuse
- Domestic violence
- Violence
- Combat trauma
- Traumatic bereavement
- Torture

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Being traumatised at the hands of others

- Higher rates of C-PTSD
- Shame and self-loathing is high
- Traumatised attachments
- Fragmented minds
- Interpersonal issues
- Lack of safeness
- Memory disorganisation
- Sense of self shaped by trauma intra and interpersonal functioning
ICD-11 Complex PTSD – new diagnosis

**PTSD**
- Re-experiencing
- Avoidance
- Hyperarousal

**Complex PTSD**
- Re-experiencing
- Avoidance
- Hyperarousal
- Affect dysregulation
- Profound self loathing
- Interpersonal difficulties

Therapies that attend to all areas of distress

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The race is on

"The one thing that I really appreciate about being a runner is the incredible friendships and camaraderie that we, as runners, share."

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To phase or not to phase ........
The Answer

Evidence

The Intention
The Evidence

Safety of Trauma Memory work in Unstable Populations


Psychological Treatments for PTSD following Childhood Sexual Abuse


Rethinking the need for Stabilisation in Treatment of Complex PTSD


Intensive treatments of complex PTSD using exposure and EMDR


Trauma Memory processing leads to improvement in emotional regulation

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The Intention

What would I see differently about you if you no longer had complex PTSD?
Flourishing

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Psychological Flourishing

- Safe and secures attachments
- Ability to regulate your own mind
- Insight and empathy
- Experience self as integrated
- Experience others minds as safe
- Form connectedness and affiliation with others
Does Compassion Focused Therapy Have A Role In Treating C-PTSD
Does Compassion Focused Therapy help with Symptoms of Complex PTSD?

- Re-experiencing
- Avoidance
- Hyperarousal
- Affect dysregulation
- Profound self-loathing
- Interpersonal difficulties

- Promotes emotional tolerance
- Engages with emotional distress
- Regulates sympathetic nervous system and improves HRV
- Promotes self-self compassionate relationship, reduces self hatred and criticism
- Antidote to shame
- Increases affiliation and emotional safeness

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Evolutionary Functional
Social processing
Regulating threat
Stimulate affiliative motivation
Stimulate affiliative intention

Social Mentality Theory
Highly Social Organisms

Developed by Professor Paul Gilbert

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The Tricky Brain

The Flow of Life
Like all living beings we are just here, now.. part of the flow of life.

The Human Brain
... And with a brain we did not design, but evolved through thousands of years of evolution.

New Brain Capacity
Our brains have the capacity to imagine, have complex language and be creative. But they also have the capacity to ruminate and worry.

Shaped
We are shaped by our family, which we did not choose. Ask yourself: would you be the same person if you had been kidnapped as a three day old baby and raised by the Mafia?

It's Not Your Fault
It's not our fault that our brains get caught up in anxious or depressive loops. Our brain is a tricky thing. But we can begin to address those loops using compassion.
Emotional Balancing within Minds

3 Functionally Distinct Types Of Emotional Regulation Systems

- Emotions for dealing with threats
- Emotions to stimulate us to go out, achieve, acquire
- Emotions that give rise to contentment, safeness, peacefulness, slowing down

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Regulating Affect
Complex PTSD and Emotion regulation

Avoidance and despair
- Cant look forward
- Feeling of inner deadness
- Dissociation
- Despair
- Extreme avoidance

Self harm

Hyperarousal and negative changes in mood
- Angry
- Anxious
- Disgust
- Shame

Disconnection and disengagement
- Problems forming relationships
- Self blaming beliefs
- Self criticism
- Self loathing
- Mistrust of others

Self harm
Internal Threat and more threat

No self-affiliation – experiences an unlovable self shamed self

Self blame shame

Flashback

Neurophysiological networks threat primed

No emotional memories of soothing

maintains

maintains

Others are threats or alarming

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Internal Threat and Soothing

Internal representations of helpful others and sources of comfort

Emotional memories of soothing

Self-affiliation – experiences a lovable self

Neurophysiological networks

Affiliative/Soothing

Calms

Flashback

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Compassionate Minds

- A whole story about our life
- Self-soothing talk
- Supporting Wise
- Integrated memories
- Compassionate feelings
- Acceptance Wisdom of non-blame
- Compassionate perspectives
- Warm Safe Calm

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Healthy attachments
to me
Wholehearted Me

Sad  Anger  Motivated

Fear  Safe and soothed  Joyous

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Compassionate Self

- Affiliated
- Nurtured
- Warm
- Calm
- Safe
- Secure
- Connected
- Open
- Hearted

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Can you imagine

- Parents don’t love you
- Parents don’t want you
- No parents
- Not protected
- Deliberately harmed by others
- Not nurtured
- No joy
- No safeness in your world
The relational context of the traumatised person RICK

- scared
- powerless
- unsafe
- alone
- neglected
- abandoned

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Traumatised RICK

Ambivalent
Avoidant
Disconnected
Dysregulated
Frightened
Self loathing

Alone
Unsafe
Scared
Neglected
Abandoned

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Disconnected, dissociated, denigrated, dangerous

- Fragmented altered states of consciousness
- Aggressive behaviours, substance abuse, affective lability, numbing self harm
- Self attacking statements, lack of self care,
- Difficulty with self soothing, expression of profound isolation, experience of self as oddly different, hiding self from others
Intra and Interpersonal Relationships

Compassionate Self

Safe, calm, warm, Open hearted, Nurtured, Affiliated

Traumatised Self

Closed FFAF, Abandoned, Scared, Neglected, Unsafe, Alone
Creating Conditions For Safeness, Care and Connectedness

In our own minds

In the mind of others
What if you don’t know what you don’t know and you can’t feel what you have never felt?
You can train your brain to be compassionate
Creating A New Emotional Context

Phase 1
Developing Compassionate Minds

Phase 2
Developing Compassionate Perspectives on Trauma Experiences

Phase 3
Living with Compassion in your life after trauma

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Dr Deborah Lee, 2019

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Traumatised

- Empowered
- strong
- Connected/
- affiliative
- Nurtured/
- looked after
- Calm
- soothed
- Powerless
- Scared
- Abandoned
- Neglected
- Unsafe
- Alone
- Connected
- safe
Our Mascot

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The Two Psychologies of Compassion

1. To recognise and engage with the suffering

2. To be motivated to alleviate the suffering
Courage, dear heart

-C.S. Lewis
The Compassionate Resilience Group

1 - 5
Compassionate insights
- Evolution
- Human suffering
- Tricky brain
- Affect regulation
- Threat/Shame/SC
- Attachment
- Compassion

6 - 8
Motivation to care
- Addressing fears of compassion
- Grief
- Commitment to change

9 - 12
Compassion in action
- Problems solving and daily living with a compassionate mind
- Values based living

Discussion
- Mindful attention
- Soothing rhythm
- Breathing
- ‘You at your best’

Exercises
- Safe place
- Compassionate flow
  - self → others
  - others → self
  - Perfect nurturer

Physiology and brain training
- Compassionate dialogue
- Method acting
- Mental rehearsal
- Compassionate problem solving
- Compassionate action

Yorkshire & Lincolnshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust
Choosing to develop your compassionate mind
Compassionate minds

- Care for wellbeing
- Tolerate distress
- Mentalise
- Meta perceive
- Empathise
- Notice distress
- Regulate emotions
- Wise
Mindfulness

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Safeness - connecting and the parasympathetic system: The Vagus Nerve

- PNS influence on heart rate – slows beat down during outbreath
- Associated with affiliation, tend & befriend, general positive emotional tone
- Sensitive to safeness
THE POWER OF BREATHE

PUMPED ADRENALINE

HR 120 coherent
Heat up positively
- PASSION
- DETERMINATION
- FOCUS

HR 120 erratic
- ANXIETY
- PARANOIA
- FEAR

Relaxed ACETYLCHOLINE

HR 50 coherent

HR 50 erratic
- APATHY
- BOREDOM
- DETACHMENT

Positive emotional state
DHEA
Dehydroepiandrosterone
Performance enhancer

Self compassion

Negative emotional state
CORTISOL

Self critic

Positive emotional state

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Compassionate Imagery

- Care giving imagery
- Compassion as Flow
- Perfect nurturing imagery

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Let it flow

Mindful attention
Soothing Rhythm
Breathing

Compassion flow
You to others
Other to you
You to yourself

You at your best
The best version of you

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Knowledge
Understanding
Wisdom
Strength
Calm Minds Think Differently

1. Mindful Attention
   - Notice threat state

2. Soothing Rhythm Breathing
   - Engage PNS, HRV calm, grounded

3. Compassionate Flow
   - Engage emotion soothing affiliation/care

4. Problem Solving with KUWS
   - Develop compassionate mind perspective

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Building “a Compassionate Armour”: The Journey to Develop Strength and Self-Compassion in Group Treatment for Complex PTSD
Emily Ashfield, supervised by Dr Carmen Chan

Background
- Phase-based treatment is recommended in Complex PTSD as difficulties in emotional regulation and shame impact detrimentally on exposure treatment
- Compassion-Focused Therapy (CFT) aims to reduce shame and self-criticism—but it is not yet clear how CFT brings about change for individuals with Complex PTSD

Method
- Constructivist Grounded Theory - to understand the process of change for 11 women with a diagnosis of Complex PTSD
- All participants had attended a 12-week group treatment based on CFT, within a Specialist Trauma Service

Results — The Journey of Change Model

Conclusion
- Support was provided for a phase-based approach
- Being in a group was crucial for the change process
- Psychoeducation alone was not sufficient for change—experiencing compassion and accessing emotions were also key
If the mind of the other did not exist you would not have been hurt and harmed in this way

Dr Deborah Lee, 2019
Traumatised choices
Human nature

You are not the first and sadly you will not be the last to experience

You are not alone in your suffering

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Compassionate resilience enhances

- Integration
- Motivation to care
- Development of compassionate self
- Affect regulation,
- Interpersonal functioning,
- Problem solving
- The ability to hold trauma memories with a caring compassionate mind.
- Enhances feelings of self-soothing and safeness in these memories
- Reduces self-critical maintenance cycles in shame by developing compassionate self-talk.
Creating a new emotional context

Phase 1
Developing Compassionate Minds

Phase 2
Developing Compassionate Perspectives on Trauma Experiences

Phase 3
Living with Compassion in your life after trauma

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Evaluation of a phase-based treatment for Complex PTSD

Jenny Readings
Deborah Lee

Supervised by
Dr Jo Billings (Berkshire Traumatic Stress Service) and Dr Gary Brown (Royal Holloway)
Compassionate Resilience Group
Outcomes
PTSD symptoms

PCL-5 (n=48)

- No change
- Reliable Change Indicator

Reliable reduction in PTSD symptoms

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PTSD symptoms – PCL-5 (n=48)

- 67% of sample showed reliable reduction in PTSD symptoms
- 27% of sample showed clinically significant reduction in PTSD symptoms
- Sample showed a statistically significant reduction in PTSD symptoms
Self-Compassion

Forms of Self-Criticising/Attacking & Self-Reassuring Scale
(n=48)

- Inadequate Self
- Reassured Self
- Hated Self

Pre-CRG vs Post-CRG

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Anxiety and Depression

GAD7 (n=48)

PHQ9 (n=47)

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General Functioning

WASAS (n=47)

- Significant functional impairment cut-off
- Moderately severe functional impairment cut-off

Pre-CRG | Post-CRG
CRG Pre-Post Analysis t-tests:

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Greatest significance indicated for Self-compassion and PTSD measures

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Phase Based Treatment Outcomes:
Greatest reductions in PTSD symptom occurs during the CRG and individual treatment.
Service Evaluation of 2018 Treatment Completers

*72% of these clients no longer meet criteria for PTSD at end of treatment

FSCSR (Self-compassion)

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Service Evaluation of 2018 Treatment Completers

GAD-7

WSAS

Ax and End of treatment n=18
Start P-ed n= 14
Start Treatment n=12
Self –Attacking/Self-Reassuring Scale

Self attacking - self reassuring scale: inadequate self subscale

Self attacking - self reassuring scale: reassured self subscale

Self attacking - self reassuring scale: hated self subscale

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Walking Away From Suffering

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If you lived without fear?
Commitment

Becoming mindful of our values,
- If we led our lives without fear and the best version of ourselves then how would we be with ourselves, our friends, our family our colleagues

Aware of our lives
- Values and self affirmation are strongly linked to self awareness, non-defensiveness, openness to positive emotions, and mindfulness

Connected to our best
- Being at your best when connected to your values.
- Claude Steele, John Cabot Zin, Martin Seligman, Paul Gilbert

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NEVER GIVE UP

No matter what is going on
Never give up

Develop the heart
Too much energy in your country
is spent developing the mind
instead of the heart

Be compassionate
Not just to your friends
but to everyone

Be compassionate
Work for peace
in your heart and in the world

Work for peace
and I say again
Never give up

No matter what is happening
No matter what is going on around you
Never give up

...H.H. The XIVth Dalai Lama
Big Thank you