CFT for Psychosis series

Session 3 (June 12th 2023) – Compassionate relating to voices and parts that hold strong beliefs

Dr Charlie Heriot-Maitland, PhD, DClinPsy
charlie@balancedminds.com

with thanks to
Dr Chris Irons, Prof Paul Gilbert, Dr Eleanor Longden (clinical)
Prof Emmanuelle Peters, Prof Til Wykes, Prof Andrew Gumley (research)

MAPPING OUT VOICES/PARTS, THEIR RELATIONSHIPS AND FUNCTIONS
SHOW UP FOR THESE RELATIONSHIPS AS OUR COMPASSIONATE SELF

PREPARING FOR COMPASSION – INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL SAFENESS

Creating *internal* cues of safeness (from the body) through practices with breathing, posture, imagery.

Creating *external* cues of safeness (from the environment and social experiences).
PREPARING FOR COMPASSION – INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL SAFENESS

- Body posture
- Grounding strategies
- Soothing breathing rhythm
- Facial expression & voice tone
- Imagery

- Social connection (family, friends, communities)
- Physical environments (safety and safety kit)
- Common humanity

PREPARING FOR COMPASSION – BODY POSTURE

**Using the body to support the mind**

Upright, confident, expansive, more volume for air in the lungs
As if body is sending signals up to mind saying, ‘you’ve got this’
PREPARING FOR COMPASSION – BREATHING PRACTICE

Body posture

Soothing breathing rhythm

Facial expression and voice tone

My calm place

Your Compassionate Self (imagery)

Your Compassionate Self (embodiment)

Your ideal Compassionate Other supporting your Compassionate Self

Compassionate Self-to-self using imagery

Compassionate engagement with a voice using imagery

AUDIOS

( audios available on www.relatingtovoices.com )
DEVELOPING A ‘COMPASSIONATE SELF’

Essentially, we’re creating the conditions (bio-psycho-social) that give us the best chance of engaging with / responding to distress.

We’re preparing the mind for emotional engagement, processing and conflict resolution.

COMPASSIONATE MIND TRAINING IN DAILY LIFE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Mon</th>
<th>Tues</th>
<th>Wed</th>
<th>Thu</th>
<th>Fri</th>
<th>Sat</th>
<th>Sun</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attended CFT seminar</td>
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<tr>
<td>Observations / learnings / reflections</td>
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</table>
### MAKING A COMPASSIONATE FLASHCARD

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MY FLASHCARD</th>
<th>Situation that I find difficult in daily life:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Compassionate attention</strong></td>
<td>• Focus on memories of times I’ve coped&lt;br&gt;• Focus on courage feeling in body&lt;br&gt;• Surroundings / colour: Image of a wise face&lt;br&gt;• Brains are tricky: Small blue planet&lt;br&gt;• It’s not my fault&lt;br&gt;• Anxiety usually peaks then calms in 5 mins&lt;br&gt;• 2 mins breathing app&lt;br&gt;• Listen to music&lt;br&gt;• Slow down&lt;br&gt;• Smell my lavender oil&lt;br&gt;• What would my compassionate self do?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Compassionate thinking</strong></td>
<td>•</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Compassionate behaviour</strong></td>
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### FLASHCARD EXAMPLES

This is my ‘anxious self’, part of the threat system, doing its job (meant to be biased towards threat). **THIS TOO SHALL PASS**. In a few mins, my mind will move into a different pattern. Take **TIME & SPACE** to **BREATHE**, attention to feet, posture, open chest, shoulders. **Notice urge** (e.g. protect, avoid, ruminate), sit with urge, rather than act. Ride the wave, until anxious self has settled. Go for a walk & self **COMPASSION**.

1. **NOTICING** – describe each element<br>   - body? feelings? thoughts? urges?<br>2. **GROUNDING** – ‘toolkit’ / secure base<br>   - breathing, posture, stability, exercise<br>   - calling a friend / connecting, loud music<br>   - imagery of groundedness (tree, mountain)<br>3. **OPENING** – compassionate container<br   - Making room for / allowing in vulnerability<br   - “it’s ok to feel vulnerable”, “ride the wave”<br   - “this will pass”. Open – purge – heal – peace
### DEVELOPING YOUR COMPASSIONATE SELF

Audios available on [www.relatingtovoices.com](http://www.relatingtovoices.com)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Body posture</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Soothing breathing rhythm</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Facial expression and voice tone</td>
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<tr>
<td>My calm place</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Your Compassionate Self (imagery)</strong></td>
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### DEVELOPING A COMPASSIONATE RELATIONSHIP
PUTTING THE COMPASSIONATE SELF TO WORK

• Preparing for compassion
  • Grounded posture
  • Soothing breathing rhythm
  *(using the body to support the mind)*

• Qualities of your compassionate self
  • Wisdom
  • Strength
  • Caring-commitment

• Compassionate engagement and action, using:
  • Role play / chair work
  • Imagery
  • Letter-writing

VIDEOS – ENGAGING WITH VOICES PLAYLIST

*Engaging with Voices with Charlie, Rufus and Elisabeth*
*YouTube playlist link*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Duration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#1</td>
<td>Introducing ourselves, the videos and our values</td>
<td>5:57</td>
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<tr>
<td>#2</td>
<td>Things to consider when you want to engage with voices</td>
<td>11:03</td>
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<tr>
<td>#3</td>
<td>Thinking about how to change the power balance</td>
<td>11:51</td>
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<tr>
<td>#4</td>
<td>Thinking about the function a voice might have</td>
<td>14:14</td>
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<tr>
<td>#5</td>
<td>How to work with nonverbal voices or voices that may not want to engage</td>
<td>9:44</td>
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<tr>
<td>#6</td>
<td>Mapping out voices in space</td>
<td>5:55</td>
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<td>#7</td>
<td>Mapping out voices on paper</td>
<td>9:45</td>
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<tr>
<td>#8</td>
<td>Nurturing a compassionate self and encountering a voice</td>
<td>14:53</td>
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<tr>
<td>#9</td>
<td>Thinking about whether to talk directly or indirectly with a voice</td>
<td>5:33</td>
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<tr>
<td>#10</td>
<td>Talking to a voice from compassionate self</td>
<td>14:06</td>
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<tr>
<td>#11</td>
<td>Reflective practice with voices</td>
<td>12:08</td>
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<tr>
<td>#12</td>
<td>Talking to a voice that sounds like an abusive person from the past</td>
<td>3:01</td>
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<tr>
<td>#13</td>
<td>Writing with voices</td>
<td>7:02</td>
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<tr>
<td>#14</td>
<td>Talking with a voice can help understand its intentions</td>
<td>8:23</td>
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<tr>
<td>#15</td>
<td>Using the body</td>
<td>9:06</td>
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CHAIR WORK

Voice (Threat-giving)

Hearer (Threat-receiving)

Compass.
self

Interviewer

Therapist

Compass.
self
Role play script

Example of voice-bearer, Stuart, doing "chuck voice" with his CFT therapist

Therapist: Okay, Stuart, so as you know we’ve been doing a lot of work in our sessions on building and deepening your Compassionate Self, and we've decided that now might be a good time to start bringing this compassionate part of you into conversation with your voices. This might help you to understand the voices a bit more.

One way that we can start this conversation is to use these three chairs here. Whatever chair you are sitting in will mean that you are speaking from the perspective of that part of you, or that voice. When your sitting in this chair, you're speaking to your Compassionate Self, and then you can move around the different chairs to take each of the different perspectives.

Stuart: Okay, so it sounds okay, but it might be quite different because I've never really spoken to my voices. I don't know what will happen.

Therapist: What do you think you'd be able to do? What would you be worried about?

Stuart: Well, they might get angry with me, particularly the voice that's always critical and picky on me anyway.

Therapist: So, you're not quite sure how the voices will react? You're thinking it could be quite a tough conversation? Yes, I think you're right, you are doing something different here, trying something new, which can be a scary idea.

What qualities of your Compassionate Self do you think could be helpful with this?

Stuart: Yes, okay, good idea. Let's just have the Compassionate Self in this chair and Raven in this chair.

In the third chair here, it might be helpful to have the part of you that receives this criticism from Raven. This is the part representing how you feel in response to Raven: they are blunter and to the point. How would you describe this part of you?

Stuart: This part of me feels beaten down and hurt. This part is quite aware of Raven's power, and of what he might do.

Therapist: Okay, so what would be the main feeling experienced by this part of you? For example, would it be feeling powerless, weak,...?

Stuart: No, mainly anxious.

Therapist: Okay, so we can either call this your "anxious part", or "anxious self". Or would you like to give this part a name as well?

Stuart: I'll call it my anxious self.

Therapist: Okay, we now have all the chairs filled— one for Raven, one for your anxious self, and one for your Compassionate Self.

Are you ready to start?

Stuart: We're ready to talk, but with Compassionate Self directly questioning the voice...

Stuart: Okay, so you know we've been doing a lot of work in our sessions on building and deepening your Compassionate Self, and we've decided that now might be a good time to start bringing this compassionate part of you into conversation with your voices. This might help you to understand the voices a bit more.

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What qualities of your Compassionate Self do you think could be helpful with this?
Therapist: Okay, thank you for your explanation, Raven. So, Stuart, please can you now come back to the Compassionate Self's chair. Again, just take a moment to orientate to your Compassionate Self. What does your Compassionate Self notice?

Stuart (as CS): Raven's very angry. He's really trying to get this message across to me that I'm useless.

Therapist: Okay yes, and he's trying to tell you that over and over again. I wonder why that is?

Stuart (as CS): I don't know. He didn't really say. I'll ask him.

Stuart (as Raven): Okay, Raven. What do you think would happen if you didn't criticise me?

Therapist: Now move over to Raven's chair. What does Raven think will happen if he suddenly stopped criticizing?

Stuart (as Raven): You'd look a fool of yourself. Everyone would find out what an idiot you were.

Therapist: Thank you for explaining that, Raven. Stuart, please now come back to the Compassionate Self's chair.

Therapist: That's interesting, Raven thinks that he has to criticise you to stop you from making a fool of yourself. What do you make of that?

Stuart (as CS): He might be trying to keep me safe in some way. He's trying to warn me or something.

Therapist: Yes, so although he's expressing a lot of anger and criticism, there may be some kind of warning underneath that. Or that he's trying to protect you in some way.

Stuart (as CS): What do you think Raven might need from you right now so that he doesn't always need to fear the worst?

Therapist: Raven, I can see that for myself. I'm a stronger person now. I'm feeling more confident around people. Yes, I've also been worried about making a fool of myself in the past, and I will keep my eye on that, but things are different now. I think I've got a lot to offer, and I do want to start taking steps forward in my life.

Therapist: That's brilliant, thank you for that. So now would you like to come back to the chair. Just give yourself a moment to orientate yourself to how it feels to be Raven.

Stuart (as Raven): I'm feeling anxious, scared.

Therapist: Okay, so anxious and scared. And Raven, if that anxiety and feeling of being scared had words, what would they say?

Stuart (as Raven): I'm worried that you'll get rid of me. That you won't need me anymore. Maybe things are different now, but what if things get bad again? What will happen if I'm not around?

Therapist: Thank you for that. Raven, if you can now please come back to the Compassionate Self's chair. Again, just take a moment to orientate to your Compassionate Self.

Therapist: Okay, so it seems that in addition to Raven trying to protect you in some way, he's also worried that you might try to get rid of him. That you won't need him anymore. What does your Compassionate Self think about that?

Stuart (as CS): Yes, I mean for starters, I can't get rid of him, he is just part of me now. I don't have the power to get rid of him. And secondly, perhaps I do need him to keep me in check, I just wish he wasn't so nasty, so critical all the time.

Therapist: Do you feel anything else about what Raven has said?

Stuart (as CS): I feel a bit sorry for him that he's obviously scared about me getting rid of him.

Therapist: And what impact does it have on you when Raven is so anxious and critical all the time?

Stuart (as CS): Well, it makes me more likely to make a fool of myself. I feel worried because I feel so bad. I'm so focused on him telling me that I'm useless, that I'm more likely to screw things up.

Therapist: So, what might you need from Raven for him to do what he wants, to protect you from making a fool of yourself?
AUDIOS – COMPASSIONATE RELATING USING IMAGERY

(audios available on www.relatingtovoices.com)

| Body posture |
| Soothing breathing rhythm |
| Facial expression and voice tone |
| My calm place |
| Your Compassionate Self (imagery) |
| Your Compassionate Self (embodiment) |
| Your ideal Compassionate Other supporting your Compassionate Self |
| Compassionate Self-to-self using imagery |
| Compassionate engagement with a voice using imagery |

COMPASSIONATE MIND TRAINING (3 FLOWS)

- Preparing for imagery
  - Grounded posture
  - Soothing breathing rhythm

- Other → Self
  - Safe place
  - Color
  - Memory
  - Compassionate other

- Self → Other
  - Someone you love
  - Someone suffering

- Self → Self
  - To self
  - To multiple selves
COMPASSIONATE LETTER WRITING

- **Identification** – of the struggle / the part of you that’s struggling (e.g. with grief, stress, anxiety, etc)

- **Tuning in** – to the emotions with empathy and validation (e.g. that these are understandable and not your fault)

- **Understanding** – the ‘struggle with the struggle’ (e.g. how your understandable efforts to cope may have led to unintended consequences)

- **Attention** – to what is helpful in terms of thoughts, memories, images, etc (e.g. what helped you in the past with similar struggles, or what might help now)

- **Action** – suggesting a plan of what steps might be helpful for you in the coming days, and how compassionate self can support you with this

LETTER EXAMPLES

![Letter example 1](image1)

![Letter example 2](image2)
Identification
I am noticing that...

Tuning in
It sounds like you may be feeling...

Understanding
It’s understandable, given that...

Action
I want to help by...

Thank you!

Self-help book:
RELATING TO VOICES USING COMPASSION FOCUSED THERAPY
A Self-help Companion
CHARLIE HERIOT-MAITLAND AND ELEANOR LONGDEN

Dr Charlie Heriot-Maitland
Balanced Minds, London/Edinburgh, UK

www.relatingtovoices.com
www.balancedminds.com
REFERENCES