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The impact of COVID-19 - self compassion

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Lotus in the mud: The role of self-compassion in emotional wellbeing

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Disclosures

In relation to this presentation I have no conflicts of interest.

Michelle Croston has previously received honorariums from Gilead Sciences, ViiV Healthcare , AbbVie and Galapagos



To explore Eastern and Western philosophies to shape our understanding of compassion and self-compassion.

To provide examples of contemporary research into this area.

To explore creative and practical strategies for developing self-compassion.



What do we mean by compassion ?

Compassion can be defined in many ways, but its essence is a basic kindness, with a deep awareness of the suffering of oneself and of other living things, coupled with the wish and effort to relieve it (Gilbert 2009)

Sensitivity to suffering in ourselves and others with a deep motivation and commitment to alleviate and prevent it (Geshe Tashi Tsering 2008)

Compassion is the acknowledgment that not all pain can be 'fixed; or 'solved' but all suffering is made more approachable in a landscape of compassion (Fieldman and Kuymen 2011)

Compassion involves understanding suffering and then finding ways to alleviate this suffering.



‘The mind is its own place, and it can make a heaven of hell,
a hell out of heaven’

John Milton (1667) , Paradise lost



Paul Gilbert ‘ we have brains that are build for us not by us’ .We all have programs running in our brain and our minds our full of algorithms if A then do B .

We have three core emotional systems (Drive- Threat -Soothing) that evolved to serve important functions, which can easily get out of balance.

Our minds have evolved in a way that makes them quite ‘tricky’ (old brain v’s new brain) , so this evolution leads to us being vulnerable to getting caught up in thinking- feeling loops which can drive distress.

As humans we are shaped by experiences that we often have little control over. ‘We meet ourselves time and again in a thousand disguises on the path of life’ Carl Jung

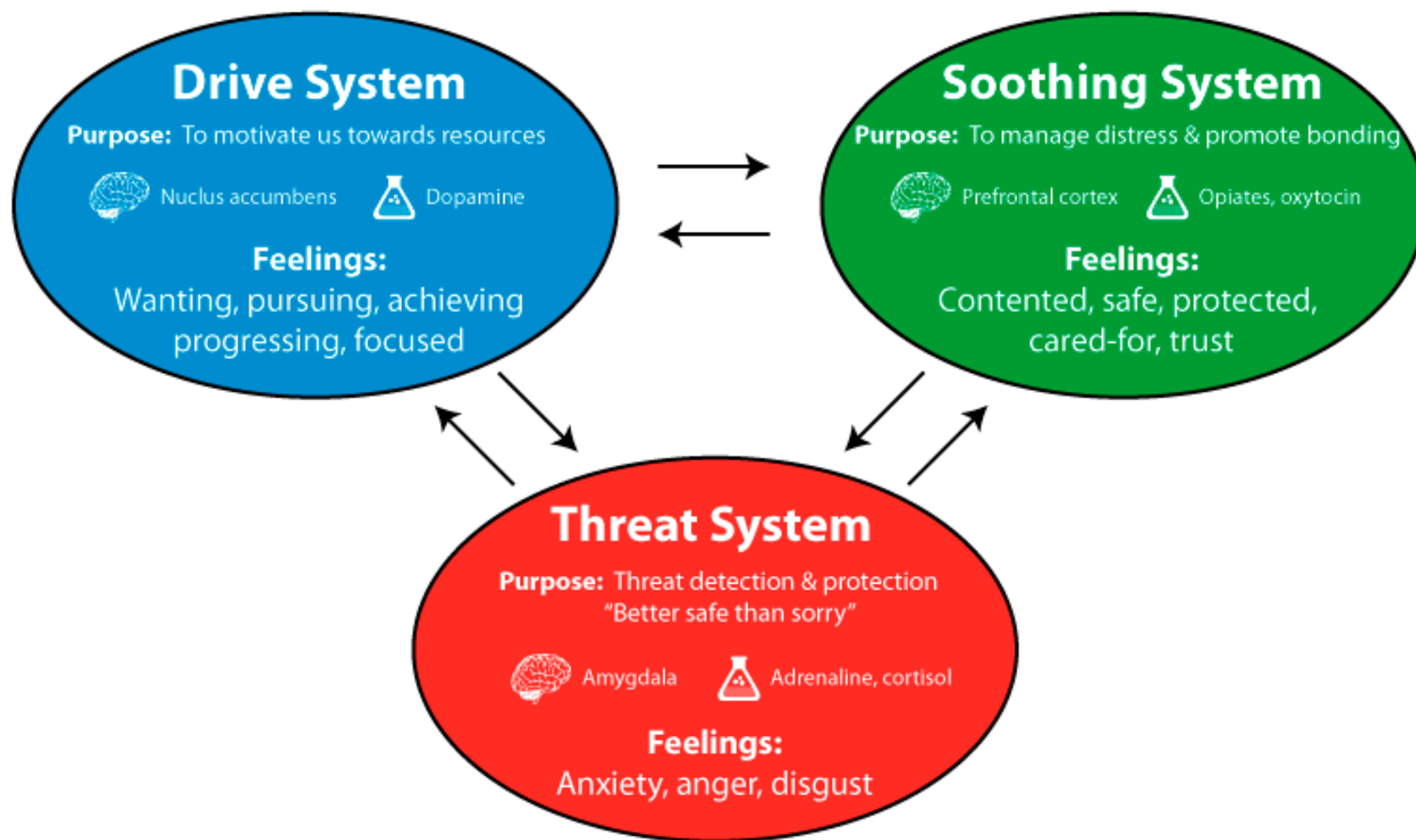
Although we didn’t create our brains it is our responsibility to explore what program is running in our minds. Increased knowledge and self-compassion can help to reduce distress caused by the complexities of the brain.



Let's not forget that the little emotions are the great captains of our lives and we obey them without realising it' Vincent Van Gogh



Paul Gilbert's evolutionary model proposes that human beings switch between three systems to manage their emotions. Each system is associated with different brain regions and different brain chemistry. Distress is caused by imbalance between the systems, often associated with under-development of the soothing system.





What is self compassion?

Self compassion is a practice in which we learn to be a good friend to ourselves when we need it the most to become an inner ally rather than an inner enemy.

The core elements involved in the definition of self compassion that we bring to bear when we are in pain: self-kindness (loving), common humanity (connected) and mindfulness (presence).

Self kindness – we all make mistakes or fail in some way so instead of beating putting a caring arm around our own shoulder

Common humanity – a sense of interconnectedness is a central component, recognizing all humans are flawed works in progress what everyone fails, makes mistakes and experiences hardship in life.

Mindfulness – Being aware a moment-to-moment experience. To be able to acknowledge when we are suffering



The physiology of self compassion and self criticism

Evolution, Mindful Compassion and the Brain



Stress response	Stress response turned inwards	Self compassion
Fight	Self – Criticism	Self-kindness
Flight	Isolation	Common Humanity
Freeze	Rumination	Mindfulness



There is the mud,
and there is the lotus
that grows out of the mud.
We need the mud
in order to
make the lotus.

– Thich Nhat Hanh





Self compassion concept analysis in nursing focuses on how as nurses we teach self compassion to the people, we provide care for (Reyes 2012)

Research exploring self compassion in nursing demonstrates a positive correlation with emotional intelligence (Heffernan et al 2020 , Senyuva et al 2013)

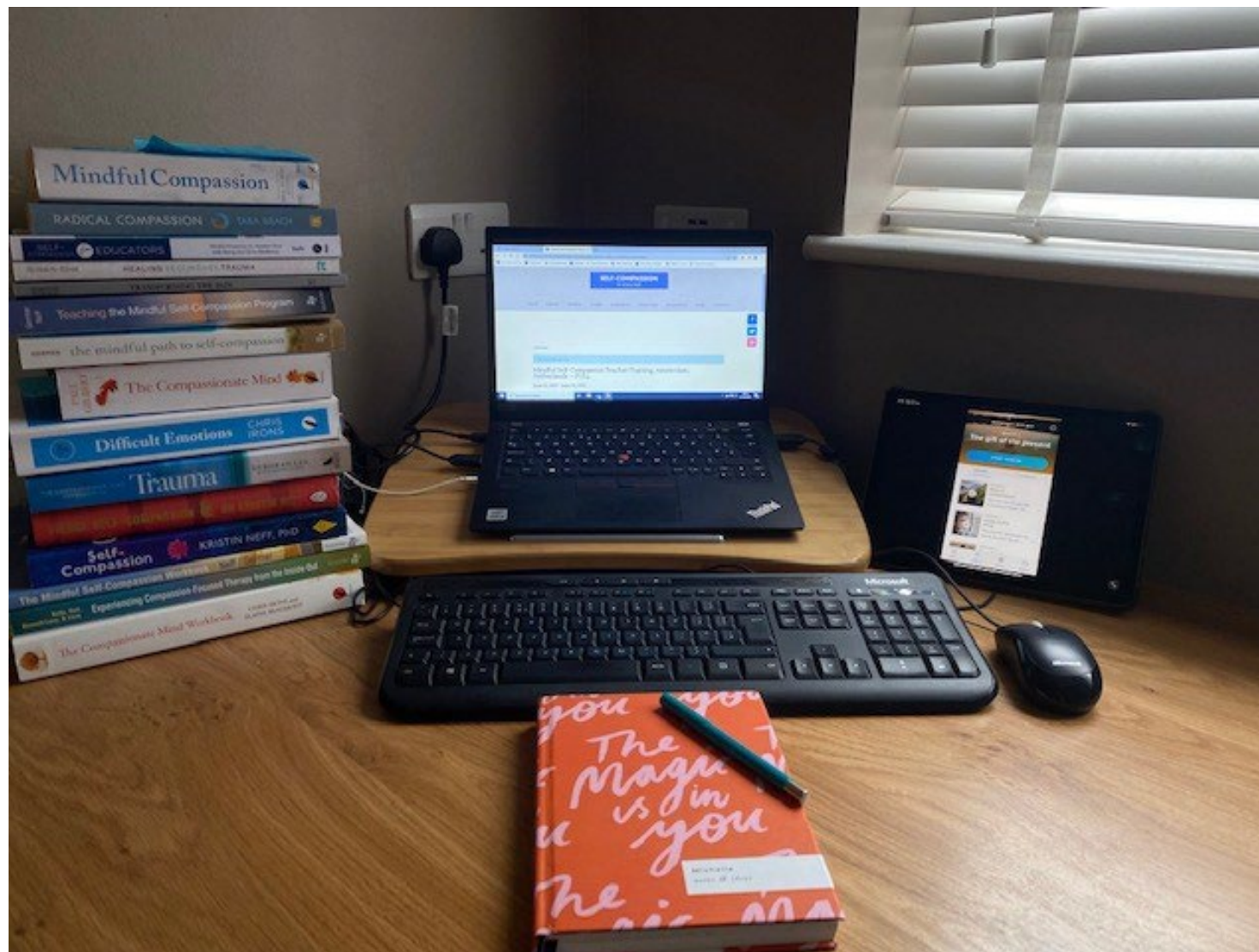
Studies have linked self compassion with an increase in compassion (Neff and Garmer 2013, Neff and Pommier 2013)

Self compassion has been demonstrated to be a protective factor for empathy and professional quality of life (Durkin et al 2016)

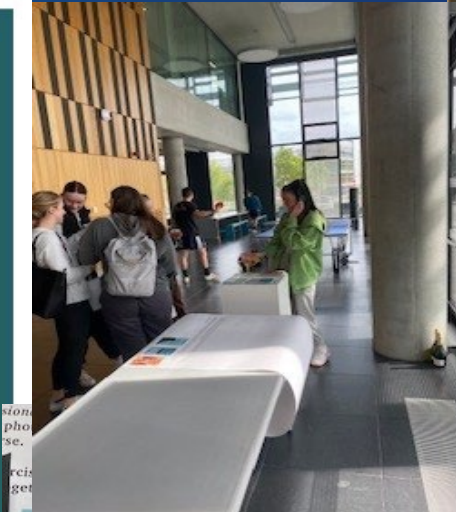
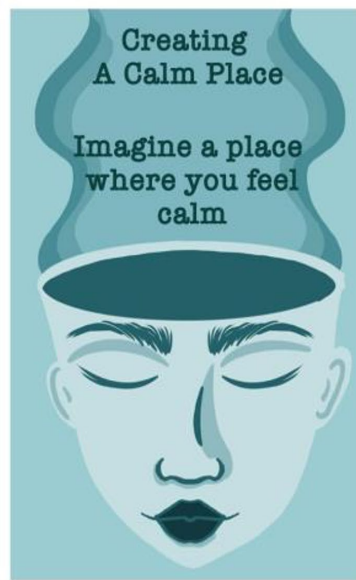
Self compassion and leadership is also been linked as being an important attribute to have (context is important)



Down the rabbit hole



Collaborative student project





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The compassionate mind approach to developing self- compassion

NHIVNA course



Learning outcomes

At the end of the 6 weeks programme you will be able to:

- Define what self -compassion is and also explore some common myths about self-compassion.
- Explore the benefits of self -compassion and learn how to build the foundations of a self-compassionate practice.
- Describe the science of self-compassion by exploring the current scientific evidence base that outlines the benefits of self-compassion.
- Develop strategies to enable you to practice self -compassion exploring ways to develop and grow compassionate self.



Overview of the course content

Week 1: Self Compassion, Theory and Research practice

Week 2: Becoming Self Compassionate

Week 3: Self Compassion and Resilience

Week 4: The Yin and Yang of Self Compassion

Week 5: Managing Difficult Emotions

Week 6: Creating a Compassionate Mind



Activities

Two Minutes under the duvet

Finding your compassionate voice

The wisdom of an older me

Self-Compassion Break

this is
a moment
of suffering.

Suffering
is a part of
the human
experience.

May I be
kind to myself
& give myself
the compassion
I need.

Self Compassion Break

Noticing the breath

Safe Place meditation

Soles of the feet



What the course is and is not for

- That it is ok that healthcare workers are underpaid, overworked, experience secondary trauma, PTSD or anything that impacts on their mental wellbeing.
- That it is your fault if you are not 'resilient' enough to cope with the demands in which you are working.
- Developing a big stick to beat you with and make you feel guilty about how you deal or have dealt with things in the past.
- Self compassion could be a useful skill to develop to help you to do your job more effectively and act as a protective factor that the ups and downs of the jobs bring.



Thoughts and Questions

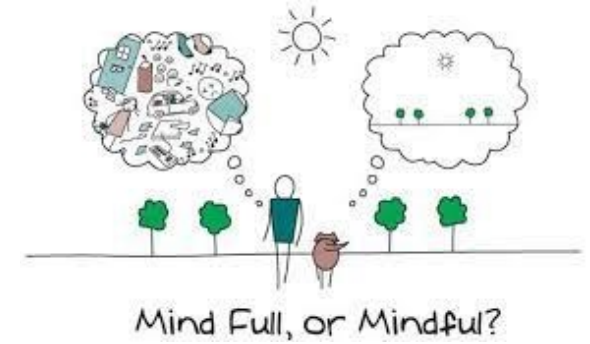
Charles Hoskinson Retweeted

 **Nature & Animals 🌿** @AnimalsWorld · 15h

This sheep escaped a farm and spent 6 years in the mountains, during which time he grew 60 pounds of wool. Predators tried to eat him, but their teeth could not penetrate the floof. You don't have to turn hard to survive the wolves, just be really, really soft and fluffy.



76 2,353 7,662





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