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MSD



O05: The compassionate minds approach to supporting psychological wellbeing in people living with HIV: enhancing self-compassion through digital innovation

Michelle Croston, Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust

Jack Summerside, Positive East

Conflict of Interest

In relation to this presentation, I declare that I have no conflict of interest.

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Overview of presentation

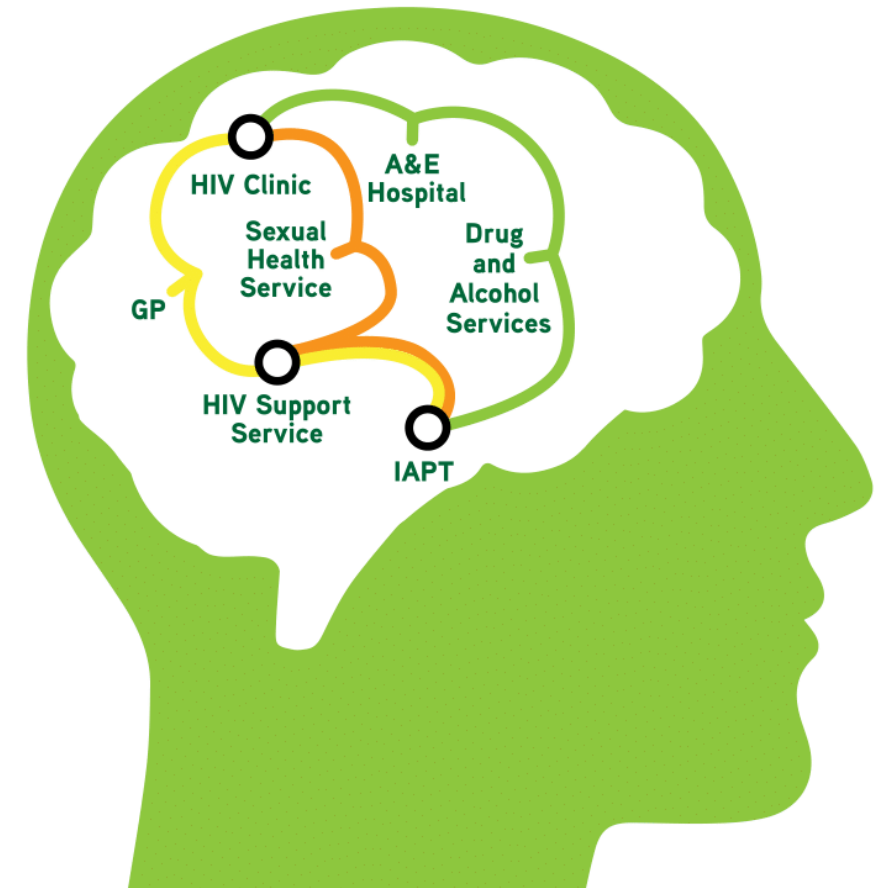
During the presentation, our aim is to:

- Explore the background that led to the development of the project.
- Outline project objectives and how we made it happen.
- Discuss the findings from the evaluation of the wellbeing day (Phase 1).
- Introduce the self compassion app and provide a snapshot of data from qualitative interviews (Phase 2).
- Explore the implications for clinical practice.
- Identify our next steps.

Background and Context within HIV Care

- A serious public health concern that we are currently facing is the impact that challenges with mental health and psychological wellbeing is having within the general populations.
- This is further compounded within HIV care as highlighted within the All Parliamentary Group report on HIV and mental health .
- Access to psychological support is often fragmented, with varying thresholds for accepting referral, potentially long waiting list, and if not, HIV specialist services, can pose a barrier for some patients receiving the support they need.
- People may also feel reluctant to engage in psychological support.

The Missing Link: HIV and mental health





what led to the development of the project?

- There is a growing body of research that supports the use of the Compassion Focused Therapy (CFT) approaches to managing complex issues, such as shame, loneliness, stigma and disease adjustment. It has been well documented within the literature that Compassionate Minds Training (CMT) (the associated skills practice) contributes to changes in the functioning of the autonomic nervous system, particularly the vagus nerve and changes in neurophysiological responses in the brain. (Best, Herring, Clarke, Kirby, & Gilbert, 2021; Gilbert, 2019; 2017; Kirby, Tellegen & Steindl, 2017; Northover, Deacon King & Irons, 2022)
- Within HIV care there is a growing body of research that has highlighted the effectiveness of using Compassion Focused Therapy (CFT) and Compassionate Minds Training (CMT), to help increase psychological flexibility, increase feelings of wellbeing and reduce suicide ideation (Khalaj et al. (2020) Chukwu and Maia (2020))
- A huge motivation for developing this project was my own experiences (MC) and the benefits I (MC) gained from using CFT and developing a Compassionate Mind.
- Finally, we were fortunate to host Dr Chris Irons on HIV Matters and the project unfolded.

Series 2 episode 1 Compassionate Minds with Chris Irons



Project objectives

- To co -create a series of well-being days with people living with HIV to enhance psychological wellbeing using Compassion Focused Therapy and Compassionate Minds Training.
- To provide an overview of Compassion Focused Therapy and Compassionate Minds Training and how it can be used to deal with difficult emotions to enhance psychological well-being.
- To promote the development and implementation of self-compassion as a result of attending the wellbeing days and having access to the self-compassion app.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of the wellbeing sessions for people living with HIV and to use this evaluation to inform future development of well-being sessions.

How we made it happen?

Method

The wellbeing sessions were co- created with people living with HIV. Once developed the 4 wellbeing days (two mixed, one female only and one male only) were co-delivered by leading experts in compassion focused therapy and peer mentors. The wellbeing days explored the principles of Compassion Focused Therapy (CFT), and its associated skills practice known as Compassionate Mind Training (CMT). Following the wellbeing events participants were invited to use the self-compassion app

Data analysis

The wellbeing days were evaluated using by Kirkpatrick (2016, 2018) four levels of training evaluation and the Technology Acceptance Model (Davis 1989) Which explores knowledge attained, current relevance , ease of understanding and barriers to use. (Phase 1)

The qualitative interviews were analysed using thematic analysis (Phase 2)

Ethical considerations

Those interviewed were given a written information sheets, participants gave written consent, to participate in the study.. Approval for the study was given by The University of Nottingham ethics committee.

The project was developed and deliver between November 2022- November 2023

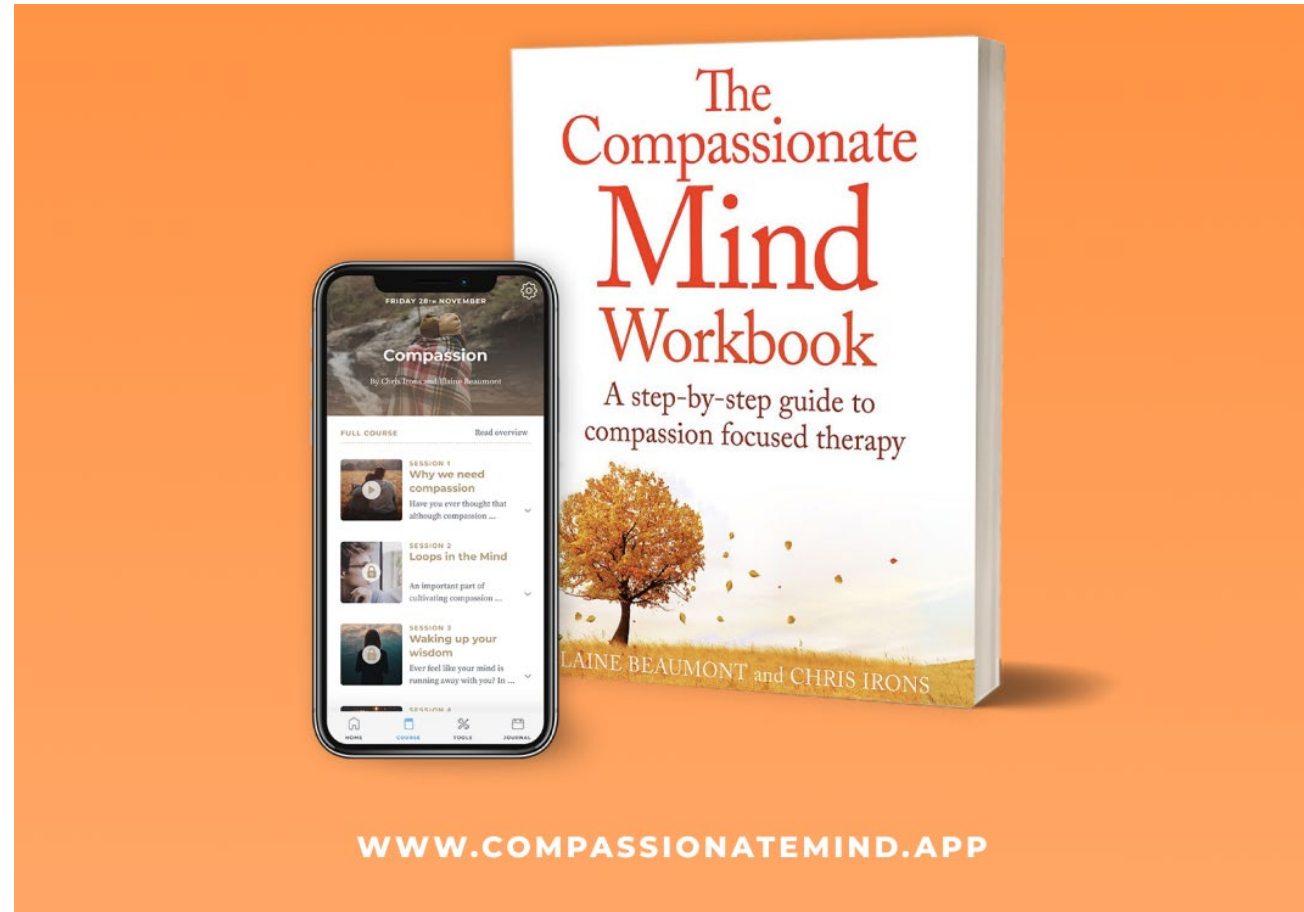


Evaluation of the wellbeing day

Phase 1

- In total thirty-five (N=35) participants attended the wellbeing events, N=21 people who identified as being male and N=14 who identified as female.
- Overall, 97%(n=34) found taking part helpful and that the sessions were engaging.
- The majority of participants (N=34) felt that the wellbeing event increased their knowledge around compassion and the benefits of compassionate minds training.
- Participants after engaging in the session identified that they had learnt that compassion can be both calm and fierce (n=30) .Over half the participants (n=20) felt that compassion had many faces and compassion is not weak but a brave thing to do/be.
- As a result of undertaking the wellbeing sessions participants reported an increased awareness of the importance of emotional regulation and how using the CFT theories they had been made aware that different systems that drive emotional responses. Five participants stated that they understood the importance of developing a positive relationship with themselves to build self -compassion.
- When asked to consider what they had learnt as a result of taking part in the wellbeing day, what was highlighted for the participants was the need to engage in more self-care activities, an increased awareness of how they respond to other people depending on their own emotional state. A key revelation that was explored within the evaluation was that different people viewed compassion and self -compassion in very different ways. That people may not be able to receive compassion in the way that it was being given or be unsure of how to accept acts of kindness based on their own previous experiences.
- One participant struggled with the session content as he felt that he could not relate to the content. Which made him question his ability to be compassionate and in turn receive compassion.

Introducing the Self Compassion App





Findings for phase 2

The questions for the qualitative interviews were developed using the technology acceptance model (TAM) .Which helps to understand factors that influence individuals' intentions to use the new technology, perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness.

Six people (n=6 – Male n=3 Female n=3) after attending the wellbeing day and using the app went on to take part in the semi structured interviews to share their experience of using the self - compassion app.

The thematic analysis of the interviews revealed the following themes:

1. Engaging with app.
2. Knowledge gained.
3. Developing self-compassion.

Emerging theme challenges with developing self-compassion

Snapshot of the Qualitative Data



I liked having the option of either a female or male voice. I also liked that I had choice about the length of the sessions. If I had more time, I often listened to both.

Participant 2:
Engaging in the app

I've had short term counselling , so in my head , pun intended it's six weeks, is this enough to sort my life out. It feels like here's the can of worms lets shake it up and then open it and then you're done in one session and then you put the worms back in the can and then they are out of sight and out of mind. The app feels more of a longer-term way of dealing with the worms.

Participant 1 -Knowledge gained

It is something that we all think that we know what it is(self-compassion/compassion), but we all experience it and give it in different ways. You know like the old, romance novels, you read them and think that is not love , whereas some people think that's love. I think compassion is like that. There's not a one set definition. It probably means different things to different people.

Participant 4- Knowledge gained

The app has been useful when I have been listening to the content my brain goes off to make sense of what I am hearing. When the app suggests focusing on your pulse in the heart rate feature, I wonder if it knows that I have had five heart attacks, or will it be able to recognise that I have high blood pressure.

Participant 1: Engaging with the app

When people are going through challenges, I think what you need is a mental hug. Whereas if you if you're not very compassionate minded, you don't want that hug .Just being aware that people are not ok is sometimes enough.

Participant 4- Developing self-compassion

The tools I have learnt really help you anchor your thoughts around self-compassion They really make you feel relaxed. I think using those breath techniques have been really good for me

Participant 2 Developing Self compassion

Implications for clinical practice

- As HIV care moves towards a chronic manageable disease area, service delivery is changing, with patients accessing services delivered by different providers to meet their healthcare needs. New ways of working are needed to be explored to ensure that we meet the evolving needs of people living with HIV.
- Compassionate minds training is an acceptable way to provide psychological support for people living with HIV.
- Consideration must be taken with regards to who is offered the app and what support may be required.
- The way in which compassionate minds training is delivered needs careful consideration. A more hybrid way of offering support whilst using the app may help to maximise the impact for people engaging in the app. This may help to embed the concepts, increase engagement and offer practical support, whilst providing a safe space to ask questions.
- Co creation and co delivery is key to moving forward when designing strategies to improve psychological wellbeing.

Summary and Next Steps

The wellbeing day and use of self compassion app was well received by people living with HIV.

Next step is to secure funding to consider the use of a hybrid approach for people using the app. Offering online group and one to one session to explore the content and share learning.



Thank you and Questions

- Mark Santos
- Mina Kakaiya
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- Everyone who took part in the study
- Viiv Healthcare for supporting the wellbeing days .
- Positive East for host the project.
- University of Nottingham.
- Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust.



Be gentle.

You are meeting parts of yourself that you have been at war with.



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