

SYMPOSIUM

Compassion as an Integrated Psychotherapy Process



Chair: James Kirby

Psychological Flexibility ACT and CFT

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While ACT and CFT are therapies that are clearly distinct from one another, in theory and practice, they share a common appreciation of the importance of evolutionary psychology, training in mindfulness, and sophisticated process models that relate to emergence of human compassion. This presentation explores how the evolution of human affiliation, attachment dynamics and caring social behaviours have contributed to our capacity for flexible adaptive responding. Furthermore, we will review how ACT and CFT can both offer powerful and compatible interventions for enhancing compassion and psychological flexibility together.

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CFT in Relationship to Bereavement and Bereavement Support

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Within the Compassion Focused Therapy model, the context for change is underpinned by a sensitivity to suffering of self and others, with a deep commitment to try to relieve it and the cultivation of Compassionate Self. Choosing to live a vital life enriched with deep and meaningful connections and relationships invariably leads to experiences of deep pain when confronted with loss and bereavement - Two sides of the same coin.

End of life and bereavement presents a stark perspective to view these processes, provides unique opportunities and challenges for both clients and therapists and is indeed the one event that will happen in all our lives. One may feel destabilised and disorientated and experience life as being turned upside-down, in part mirroring the human experience of trauma.

In this presentation, we will explore the 'sticky' nature of loss and bereavement from the CFT perspective. Links to theory will be made including 'Terror Management'.

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Classical Conditioning and Body Processes in CFT

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There is now considerable evidence that evolution creates physiological systems that adapt, change and pattern themselves according to their environments. This means that physiological systems changing themselves in relation to the contingencies of threats, harms and rewards and opportunities that organisms encounter. The earliest studies of these direct forms of learning was called classical conditioning and underpinned the concepts of 'the body remembers'. This talk will briefly discuss these processes and the implications for compassion focused therapies - in particular the role of working with physiological patterns to produce change.

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Which practice qualities are key for change in a brief CMT intervention? The importance of perceived helpfulness and embodiment of the compassionate self

Marcela Matos

This study will report on the compassion mind training cultivation study. New qualitative analysis has revealed that it is not so much the frequency of the practice, but the usefulness of the concept of compassion and the embodiment of the compassionate self in everyday life and moments of difficulty (i.e., the frequency, easiness, power, soothing effect and impact of acting and feeling as the compassionate self) that are associated with increases in compassion for the self, for others and from others, reassured self, positive affect and compassionate goals, and decreases in self-criticism, fears of compassion and stress. In line with other studies it's the way in which therapies can create guided discovery for the benefits of using compassion that seems crucial.

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