



# CFT for Psychosis series

## Session 3 (June 12<sup>th</sup> 2023) – Compassionate relating to voices and parts that hold strong beliefs

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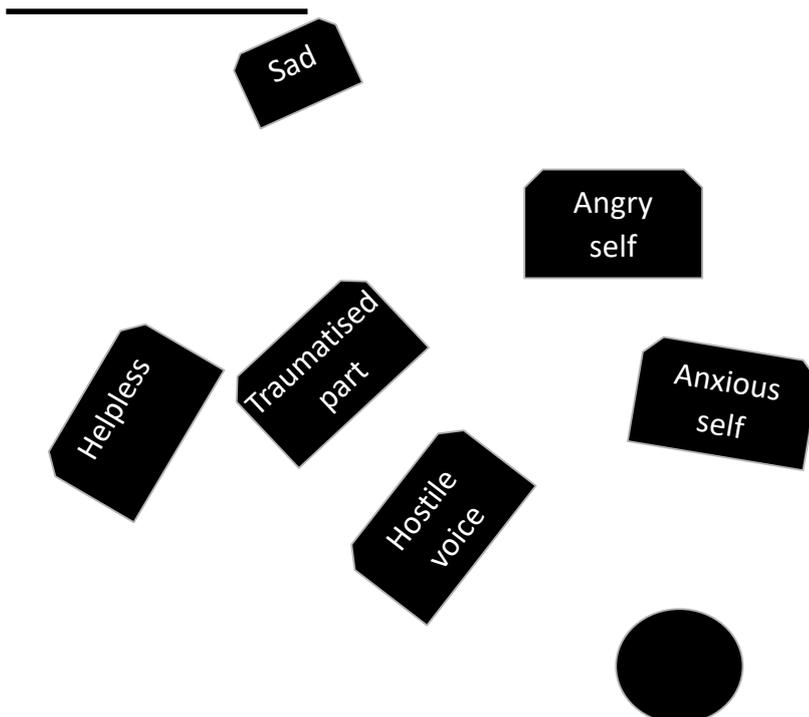
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*with thanks to*

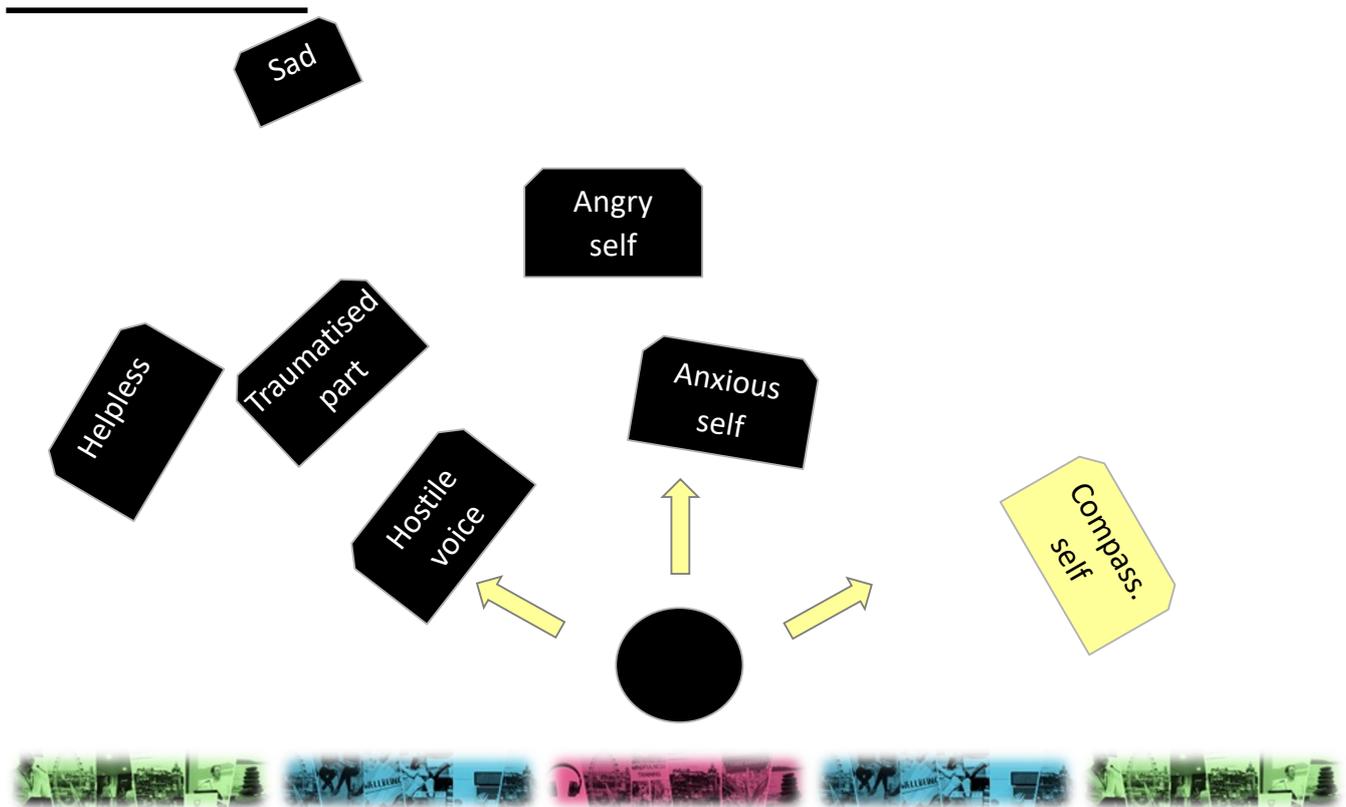
Dr Chris Irons, Prof Paul Gilbert, Dr Eleanor Longden (clinical)  
Prof Emmanuelle Peters, Prof Til Wykes, Prof Andrew Gumley (research)



MAPPING OUT VOICES/PARTS, THEIR RELATIONSHIPS AND FUNCTIONS



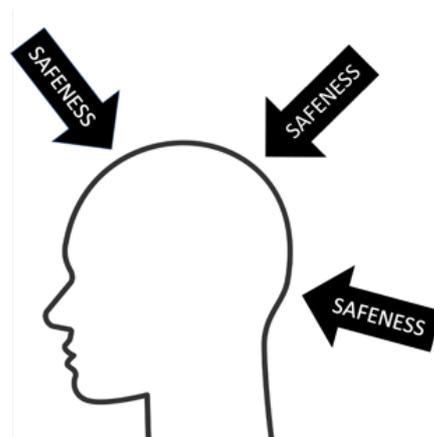
SHOW UP FOR THESE RELATIONSHIPS AS OUR COMPASSIONATE SELF



PREPARING FOR COMPASSION – INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL SAFENESS



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

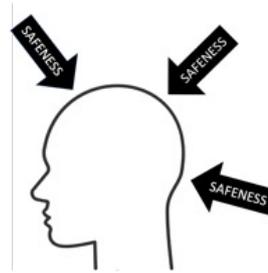
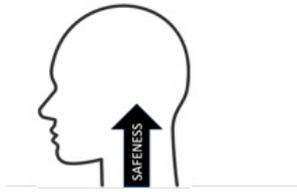


Creating *external* cues of safeness (from the environment and social experiences).



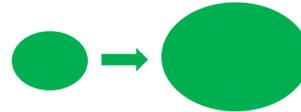
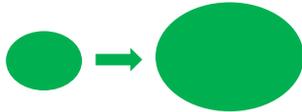
## PREPARING FOR COMPASSION – INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL SAFENESS

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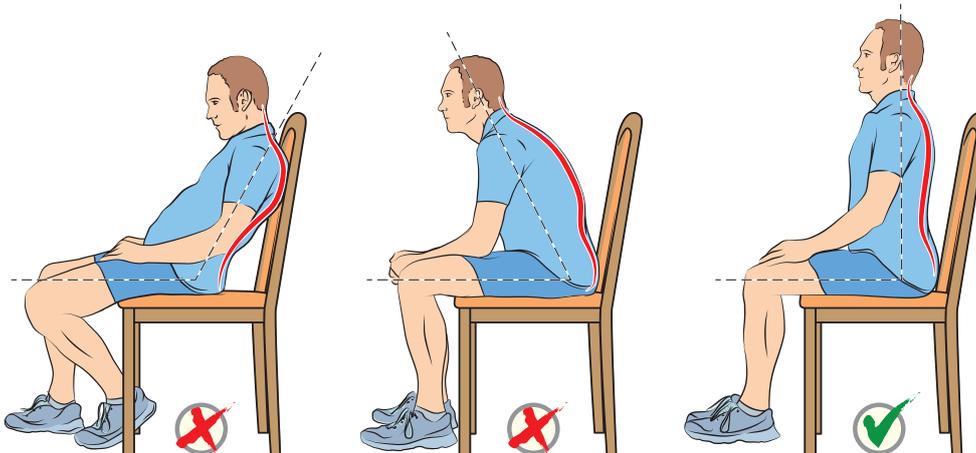
- Body posture
- Grounding strategies
- Soothing breathing rhythm
- Facial expression & voice tone
- Imagery

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



## PREPARING FOR COMPASSION – BODY POSTURE

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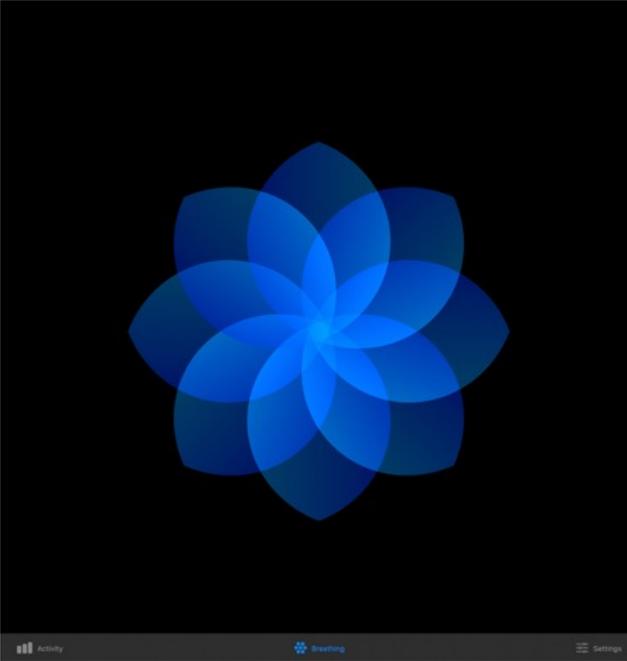


### *Using the body to support the mind*

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



## AUDIOS

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

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





## MAKING A COMPASSIONATE FLASHCARD

<u>MY FLASHCARD</u>	Situation that I find difficult in daily life:
Compassionate attention	• • • •
Compassionate thinking	• • • •
Compassionate behaviour	• • • •

Focus on memories of times I've coped

Focus on courage feeling in body

Surroundings / colour Image of a wise face

Brains are tricky Small blue planet

It's not my fault

Anxiety usually peaks then calms in 5 mins

2 mins breathing app Listen to music

Slow down Smell my lavender oil

What would my compassionate self do?



## 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  
body? feelings? thoughts? urges?  
2. **GROUNDING** – 'toolkit' / secure base  
breathing, posture, stability, exercise  
calling a friend / connecting, loud music  
imagery of groundedness (tree, mountain)  
3. **OPENING** – compassionate container  
Making room for / allowing in vulnerability  
"it's ok to feel vulnerable", "ride the wave"  
"this will pass". *Open– purge– heal– peace*



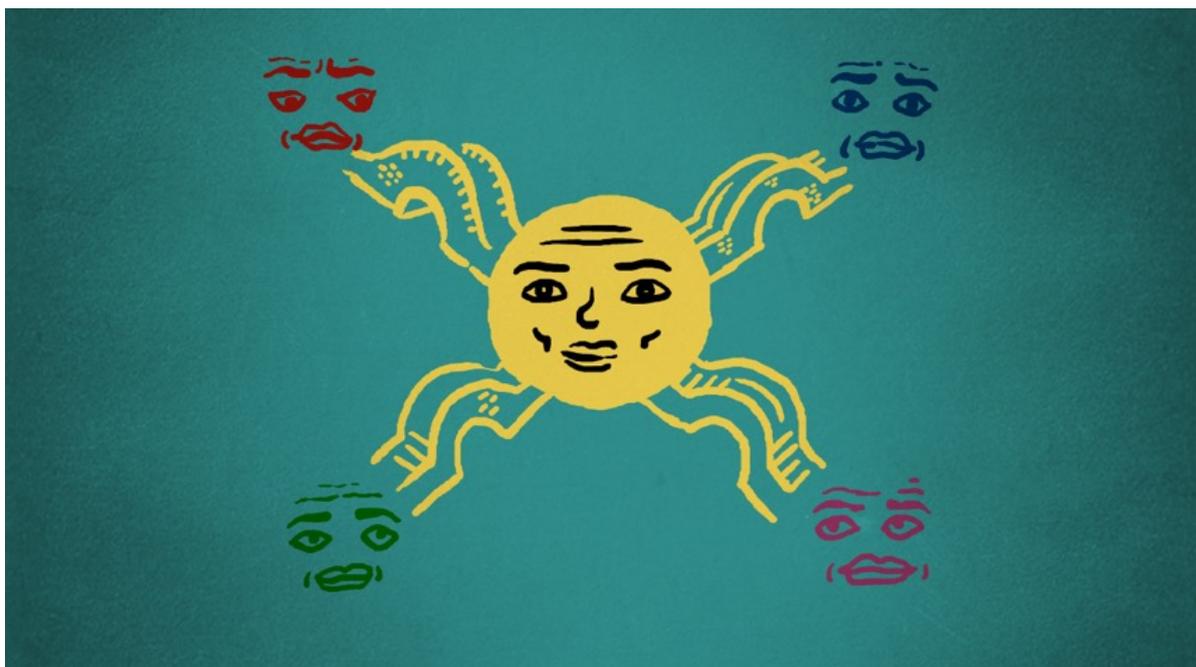
# AUDIOS – DEVELOPING YOUR COMPASSIONATE SELF

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

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



# DEVELOPING A COMPASSIONATE RELATIONSHIP



## PUTTING THE COMPASSIONATE SELF TO WORK

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- 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

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**Engaging with Voices with Charlie, Rufus and Elisabeth**  
[YouTube playlist link](#)



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



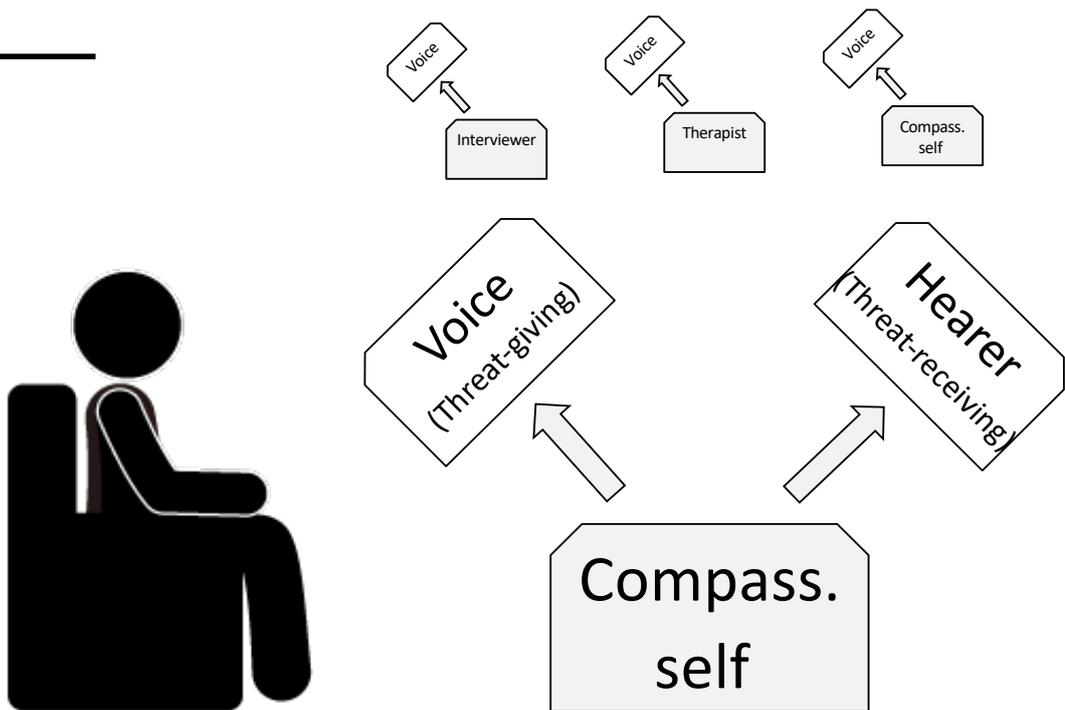
# CHAIR WORK

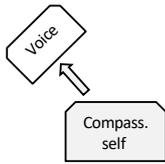
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# CHAIR WORK

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### Role play script

Example of voice-hearer, Stuart, doing "chair work" 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 us to understand the voices a bit more.

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

How does that sound?

**Stuart** It sounds okay, but it might be quite difficult because I've never really spoken to my voices. I don't know what will happen.

**Therapist** What do you think could happen? What would you be worried about?

**Stuart** Well, they might get angry with me, particularly the voice that's always critical and picking 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 quite a scary idea.

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

**Stuart** Well, definitely courage. And maybe something about dealing with the uncertainty. And staying calm?

**Therapist** Yes, this is really where the strength and courage of the Compassionate Self will come in. So, we'll start with your Compassionate Self, and really spend time activating your safeness system like we've practiced. Then, after that, focusing on the quality of courage.

So, you'll be starting from this place of safeness, calmness, and courage; and of course, this is always a place you can come back to if you're ever feeling worried, unsafe, or out of your depth. You can just come back to this chair whenever you like, and we can do some soothing breathing, bringing you back to these feelings of calmness and safeness. Does that sound okay?

**Stuart** Yes. It's good to know I've got somewhere to come back to.

**Therapist** Okay, so shall we just think about which voice or voices you would like to have in the other chairs. Who is the Compassionate Self going to talk to?

**Stuart** I guess the main voice that always nags me and says I'm useless and weak. I could speak to him and see what he has to say.

**Therapist** Yes okay. So, that sounds like quite a critical male voice. Does he have a name, or is there some description we can use to identify him in the exercise?

**Stuart** Yeah, I haven't thought about his name, but yeah we could call him something.

**Therapist** What would you like to call him? Maybe either a name that sums up his character, or just a description like "critical voice"?

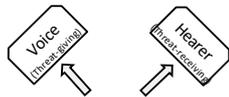
**Stuart** I'd say probably Raven. For me, that's sort of a dark name.

**Therapist** Okay, so we'll call your main critical voice Raven. Which chair do you want to be Raven's chair?

**Stuart** That one [pointing].

**Therapist** Okay. And are there are other voices that you'd also like to give a chair to, so that they can join in the conversation as well?

**Stuart** There are other voices, but maybe it's too much to talk to everyone right now. I'd rather just focus on one. Raven is really the one that's there the most.



An option at this point would be to set up a third chair for the part of Stuart that responds to/receives the criticism from Raven. We would then get the interaction between Raven, and the internal response to hearing him, before shifting to the compassion chair and having the Compassionate Self relate to both the part of Stuart that experienced the attack, and to the voice of Raven itself. For example:

**Therapist** Yes okay, good idea, so let's just have the Compassionate Self in this chair and Raven in this chair.

Now in this 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 calling you useless and weak. How would you describe this part of you?

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

**Therapist** Okay, so what would be the main feeling experienced by this part? For example, would it be feeling powerless, anxious...?

**Stuart** Yes, mainly anxious.

**Therapist** Okay, so maybe 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 full – one for Raven, one for your anxious self, and one for your Compassionate Self.

Are you ready to start?

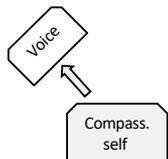
But in the current exercise, we'll stick to two chairs, with Compassionate Self directly questioning the voice...

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

Okay Stuart, we'll now start with Compassionate Self. Just take a moment to close your eyes and touch base with your grounded body posture, your soothing breathing rhythm, then noticing your body slowing and calming...

Now, begin becoming the Compassionate Self: focusing on qualities such as strength and caring-commitment, just like we discussed earlier.

Compassionate Self is developing a curiosity and desire to understand Raven and why he is like he is. Compassionate Self wants to understand his views, his feelings, and why he speaks to you in such a critical way.



Try to focus on the qualities you have as your Compassionate Self that can help you to talk to Raven to find out about some of these things.

So, now just imagine that Raven, your critical voice, is sitting there in front of you in the other chair.

Before you say anything, just take a minute to imagine what Raven looks like. Imagine his body posture, and the expression on his face.

Imagine what Raven sounds like. Maybe imagine him saying some of the words that he frequently says to you. And think about what kinds of feelings he is directing towards you when he is saying these things.

So, if you're ready, maybe just open your eyes.

Now, still from the perspective of the Compassionate Self, just ask Raven whatever it is you want to ask him.

**Stuart (as Compassionate Self [CS])** Why are you always telling me that I'm useless? What do you want?

**Therapist** Okay thank you. So now if you move over to Raven's chair so that you can be a spokesman for Raven.

And before you tell me Raven's answer, just take a moment to orientate to what it feels like to be Raven. Really try to get into what it feels like and where you experience these feelings in your body. The kinds of thoughts Raven has. How he acts, and how he holds his body.

What sort of feelings are you having as Raven?

**Stuart (as Raven)** I'm feeling annoyed, angry.

**Therapist** Okay, so these are Raven's feelings – annoyed and angry.

And now I just want to repeat the question to Raven. If you could, please just tell me Raven's answer word for word.

Raven, Stuart has asked you why you're always telling him that he's useless. He's wondering if there's a reason for this. Can you tell him what the reason is?

**Stuart (as Raven)** I'm just telling the truth. You are useless. You're always messing things up.

**Therapist** Okay, thank you Raven. And is there anything else you want to say to Stuart? Maybe about why you're angry?

**Stuart (as Raven)** Yeah, well, if wasn't for me you'd be messing up even more. You're useless. That makes me angry. I need to keep telling you that so you get the message.



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.

Therapist Yes, maybe you could ask him what he's trying to achieve by doing this, or what he is hoping will be the outcome? One way of finding that out might be to ask him what would happen if he didn't criticise you?

Stuart (as CS) 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 criticising?

Stuart (as Raven) You'd make 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.

Stuart (as CS) So, 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?

Therapist He might be trying to keep me safe in some way. He's trying to warn me or something.

Stuart (as CS) 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.

Therapist What do you think Raven might need from you right now so that he doesn't always need to fear the worst?

Stuart (as CS) Raven, I can look out 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 Raven's chair. Just give yourself a moment to orientate yourself to how it feels to be Raven. What sort of feelings are coming up for you as Raven? I'm feeling anxious, scared.

Stuart (as Raven) Okay, so anxious and scared. And Raven, if that anxiety and feeling of being scared had words, what would they say?

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

Therapist Okay, so it seems that in addition to Raven trying to protect you in some way, he is 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) I'm surprised really. Surprised that he is worried about me getting rid of him.

Therapist So, you are surprised?

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 anyway, 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? I feel a bit sorry for him that he's obviously scared about me getting rid of him.

Stuart (as CS) And what impact does it have on you when Raven is nasty and critical all the time?

Therapist Well, it makes me more likely to make a fool of myself. It paralyses me 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.

Stuart (as CS) So, what might you need from Raven for him to do what he wants, to protect you from making a fool of yourself?

Stuart (as CS) I guess, you know . . . just a bit of support. It's like that example you gave of the compassionate teacher. I understand he might need to point these things out, but not to attack me the whole time.

Therapist Okay, so it sounds as if you feel you cannot get rid of Raven, and that perhaps you wouldn't want to because you feel you need him in some way too – but that you wish the way he tried to warn and protect you was a bit more supportive, not attacking you the whole time. I wonder whether it might be worth telling Raven this yourself?

Stuart (as CS) Okay.

Therapist Raven, I'm not going to get rid of you. I can't. And I don't want to – I understand why you feel you the need to criticise me . . . but I think I would do better, and would be more likely to listen to your warnings, if you didn't call me useless all the time and if you were a bit more supportive of what I do.

Therapist Thank you for that. So now would you like to come back to Raven's chair. Just give yourself a moment to orientate yourself to how it feels to be Raven. What sort of feelings are coming up for you as Raven?

Stuart (as Raven) I feel better actually. Still anxious, but much less so.

Therapist So less anxious, that's good. What do you think it is that made the difference?

Stuart (as Raven) Well, I'm pleased Stuart is not going to get rid of me.

Therapist So, if you feel anxious about that again, and fall into the cycle of criticising Stuart because you either feel worried that he'll make a fool of himself, or worried that he'll get rid of you, what would you need Stuart to say to you?

Stuart (as Raven) I guess just to reassure me that he's not going to get rid of me and that things are better now. And yeah, perhaps that being critical is not very helpful anyway.

Therapist Thank you for that, Raven. So, Stuart, please can you now come back to the Compassionate Self's chair. Again, just take a moment to orientate yourself to your Compassionate Self. What does your Compassionate Self think about what Raven said and what he needs? Do you think you might be able to help with that?

Stuart (as CS) Yes, I would like to be able to do that. It makes sense.

Therapist And would you like to practice now exactly what you will say if Raven becomes critical again?

Stuart (as CS) Raven, thank you for trying to protect me. You don't need to worry, I'm stronger now and things are better. I'm not going to get rid of you, I need you too, but it's not helpful when you criticise me.

Therapist Thank you for that. How does that feel?

Stuart (as CS) It feels good. I think I can do that. I'm going to try to say that every time Raven criticises me. . .



# AUDIOS – COMPASSIONATE RELATING USING IMAGERY

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

<b>Body posture</b>		
<b>Soothing breathing rhythm</b>		
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<b>Compassionate Self-to-self using imagery</b>		
<b>Compassionate engagement with a voice using imagery</b>		



## 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

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- **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

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Letter from pain to

Dear [redacted] Please please  
**STOP** - over striving, I am going  
to be here even MORE if you  
keep wanting to not listen to me.  
I want you to accept I'm here.  
I want you to listen to me,  
even when I'm very intense - I'm  
getting more intense because you are  
trying so hard to FIX ME.  
Let go of pushing me away and  
lets see what happens.

Compassionate response to what <sup>pain</sup> told me.

Dear Pain Thank you for sharing with  
me how you feel. I didn't know you  
felt like this. I can hear now that  
you are trying to help me. I have been  
striving so hard to get rid of you, that  
I now see isn't a very nice thing to do.  
I haven't been listening to you, I have been  
fighting you for 29 years. I will try and  
listen to what you are telling me -  
To stop, I can see that all I'm doing, and  
wanting to run away from you isn't being  
very kind to you and you want me to  
hear you. Thank you for showing me so I can  
start listening to what you are trying to show  
me.



# WRITING TO A VOICE

**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



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