WORKSHEET 131 · FOR THE PSYCHOLOGIST

What holds me back from compassion

Fears of kindness, towards myself and from others

AIM

Identify the fears or resistance to compassion (giving it to oneself, receiving it, offering it), common in self-critical people, and explore them without forcing.

WHO IT IS FOR

Severe self-criticism, shame, a history of abuse or neglect, difficulty accepting help.

DURATION

20-30 min in session

HOW TO RUN IT

1. Normalise: many people are wary of kindness, especially if it was scarce or dangerous in their history.
2. Go through the fears in the table and let the person add others.
3. Explore where they may come from, without trying to eliminate them.
4. Choose a very small step, in a low dose.

POINTS TO WATCH

> Fears of compassion are associated with self-criticism and depressive symptoms (Gilbert et al., 2011). The work is done gradually and in session. In people who are very self-critical or who have experienced abuse, self-kindness can at first bring up sadness, discomfort or mistrust (the “backdraft” described by Germer and Neff). This is to be expected: go more slowly, in small doses, and validate the difficulty.

REFERENCES

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PSYCHOLOGIST’S NOTES

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WORKSHEET 131 · WORKSHEET TO HAND OUT

What holds me back from compassion

Best done with your psychologist

Being kind to yourself, receiving help or tenderness can be frightening. That is common, especially when gentleness has been scarce in your life. These fears have a history: identifying them is already a step.

1. Read each fear and note how true it is for you (0 to 10).
2. Write where it may come from, if you know.
3. Choose a very small, very easy step.
4. Talk about it with your psychologist.

The fear	True for me (0-10)	Where it may come from	A very small step

What I understand about what holds me back:

These exercises do not replace therapy. If you are in distress or having suicidal thoughts: 112 (European Union), 3114 (France) or the emergency number of the country where you live.

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