

Exercise 6.5: Compassion for people who overeat (pages 165-6)

Sometimes we can be critical of ourselves, or other people who overeat, often because we want to help people change and can get frustrated and angry with them (and ourselves) when we struggle to do this. This exercise is designed to help you work on this by bringing compassion to people who overeat and, in the longer term, to use your compassionate wisdom to help address overeating.

There are several ways to do this exercise; please choose whatever one you think best suits you. You can try all of the versions over the next few months. The first step is to identify the person or people that you want your compassion to flow towards. Some people find it easier to offer their compassion to someone they know personally who overeats. Other people find it easier to offer compassion to someone they don't know personally (for example, someone from a TV dieting programme, or someone they've seen in a newspaper). Other people find it easier to offer it to everyone who struggles with overeating. For the purposes of the exercise, it really doesn't matter which you choose. The key point here is to learn to feel compassion for people who struggle with overeating.

As you do this, you may begin to have ideas about what would be helpful to the person you're offering your compassion to. However, if you feel your mind becoming angry, critical or irritated with them, pull back and refocus on bringing your soothing system back online until you notice these feelings ease a little; then re-engage with your compassionate mind before recommencing the exercise. It is not unusual to have only fleeting feelings of compassion for people who overeat, and you may need to gently redirect your compassion for them several times during the exercise. This can be a challenging exercise, but with practice and dedication you can learn to apply your compassion to people (including you) that overeat.

Use the audio to help with bringing compassion to people who overeat.