

Exercise 6.6: Compassion flowing into you – using your memories (pages 168-9)

When we are distressed, our threat system naturally focuses on things that are dangerous to us, and this may mean that we temporarily forget that some people in the world have been compassionate to us. This exercise aims to nurture memories of compassion from others and use them as a basis for helping us to engage with those in our lives who can be compassionate, to recognise compassion when it is offered and to use it to help us.

Sadly, sometimes people cannot remember other people being compassionate towards them, even when they are not in their threat system. If your experiences make this difficult for you, that's sad, but it's not something you can blame yourself for, nor is it a sign of any failure or personal inadequacy on your part. If this is the case you can skip this exercise and move to Exercise 6.7. Over time, you will be ready to start to build relationships with people who can offer you compassion.

This exercise asks you to recall a memory of someone being compassionate towards you. This memory shouldn't be of a time when you were very distressed because you will then focus on the distress rather than the compassion: the point of the exercise is to focus on the desire of another person to help you. Try to spend a minute or so on each phase of the exercise. It is important to bring to mind someone who you think is motivated by compassion and wants to be helpful to you, not someone who was out to exploit you in some way or who expected things back from offering you compassion. Try to choose someone that you don't have current difficulties with or that you are worried about, as this will take your mind away from the exercise. You might want to write down the memory before you do the next exercise to check if for 'baggage' (such as grief, anger, disappointment, sadness, etc.).

Use the audio to help yourself imagining compassion flowing into you.