

## Exercise 11.6: Drawing up a level 3 compassionate formulation for my eating

### 1. *What are my key threats?*

This is where you identify the things that trigger your threat system. Remember, these may involve a range of different emotions – for example, sadness, anger, disgust or grief. You may find it helpful to use the notes you have made about your timeline and from your eating diary to identify times when you have had to deal with events and emotions that you have found difficult. You can then look for patterns. Are there any themes that you have found trigger your threat system (e.g. arguments with other people, feeling lonely, worrying whether people like you)?

Now try to list:

#### *My key threats linked to overeating*

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

and any others . . .

The next section looks at past influences. Some of these will be linked to your personal experiences, some to noticing the lives of others, some to your culture, and some will be a combination of these influences.

Now try to list:

### The past influences on my key threats

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

and any others . . .

### The current triggers to my key threats

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

and any others . . .

## 2. What are my safety strategies?

These are the things that you do, feel or think to help you manage your key threats. Alison's example mainly explored her behavioural safety strategies (e.g. trying to please others, comfort eating and dieting). Other strategies can include thoughts that protect you from powerful emotions, such as not allowing yourself to get close to others, or always blaming yourself when things go wrong. They can also include habitual emotional reactions, such as disgust, to keep us away from things we find threatening.

If you find it difficult to identify these thoughts and emotions, it may be helpful to consider what other people might notice that you do to protect yourself; perhaps talk this over with someone you trust.

Now try to list:

### My safety strategies

- 1.

2.

3.

and any others . . .

### *3. What are the intended consequences of my safety strategies?*

We may use our safety strategies in a very deliberate way, or we may find that they have become something of a habit, with their original purpose lost.

Knowing what you aim to achieve or avoid by using a particular safety strategy makes it easier to start thinking about alternative ways to cope with the problem. However, sometimes you may need to give up the strategy for a short time before you become aware of the role eating has played and are able to start considering other ways to manage.

You might find that working on your key threats individually, linking each of them to a safety strategy (or several), helps you to work out what the intended consequences of each of your strategies are.

Now try to list:

#### *The intended consequences for each of my safety strategies*

1.

2.

3.

and any others . . .

### *4. What are the unintended consequences of my safety strategies?*

We have now seen that some of our strategies have unintended consequences that can lead to further difficulties. It can be helpful to

work on each strategy separately, using your personal history, diaries, your own wisdom and the helpful observations of others, to work out the unintended consequences of your own safety strategies.

Now try to list:

*The unintended consequences of my safety strategies*

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

and any others . . .

Finally, you can explore whether these unintended consequences actually increase the level of threat you feel or encourage you to intensify your safety strategies.