

## Problems of Terror and compassion Focused Therapy Solutions in Schizophrenia

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Compassion focused therapy is an emerging and very powerful way of dealing with the fear and emotional pain with schizophrenia. Yet during the worst times many therapies may not be so effective. The problem is that it is difficult trying to be courageous or insightful when in a crisis. It is hard to concentrate on a safe place image or breathing exercises. In my case I felt in danger of being punished for 9/11 and there was nothing I could do about it.

My extreme symptoms needed an approach which combined supported graded exposure therapies with compassion so I could get out and about to be distracted. This allowed me to get out of the house as to day centers and to practice other things which were also therapeutic. This account will begin by describing the terrors of schizophrenia which will make many therapies difficult and then describe what I found useful in dealing with them including the compassion focused therapy.

The brain creates paranoia and terror of schizophrenia in many different ways. These make quite a list and may involve things like freezing, panic, shock, being stunned, flipping out, system overload, fainting, passing out, snapping and social withdrawal. The terror will keep you in this state until the delusional thoughts and body feelings pass. Using cognitive, exposure and other coping strategies are going to be very difficult. Of working with your body and mind and thereby build up resilience before things get out of hand.

Ones threat system becomes overactive and difficult to control. Then even when in shock freezing or the passing out may also happen as well. In my case I got many of these reactions at the same time as the schizophrenic symptoms were so severe. You cannot be insightful, courageous or distracted especially when frozen and shattered by fear, so you need other ways of stopping the psychoses with compassion. Being empathic to the terror will soothe it.

Moving along the spectrum of my reactions, they varied with the different degrees of severity and the changing delusional content of my thoughts. So, there were a number of ways each could be individually addressed according to their different natures. Sometimes in my case I could be momentarily stunned or shocked then it will pass. Yet the problem is that this can be more permanent, and you cannot overcome the symptoms when they all happen together.

Normally with shock or panic these things will pass and all it takes is learning not to overreact and take a few deep breaths. But with schizophrenia the terror will keep you in the grip of fear, so the usual coping strategies like trying to build courage or safe place imagery are not immediately effective. Indeed anything that focuses on mental activity can be hard and therefore one has to focus on behaviour and movement. Then as with cognitive approaches there are still going to be serious problems. It is instructive to see the limits these two ways of calming down have during the worst times in schizophrenia.

The problem with insight is there will be no chance to think things through with others when getting more severe symptoms. The only answer here is for someone else like a trusted family member or support worker to help you tolerate what you are going through. In many ways you might not be calm down even for this, especially given the different ways the illness can overwhelm you all at once. So, this is where the courage is important - how to bare and tolerate the fear in oneself.

Insight requires mindfulness which is very difficult as you may be withdrawn or captured by delusional thinking. Mindfulness is a way we can try and stand back and observe what is happening in the mind and body even as we are experiencing it. So, we are able to observe that we are being flooded with terror because of our threat system has been activated. Trying to become an observer of one's experience rather than completely absorbed in the experience is difficult but can be helpful. Thus, we need to understand that fear may be too much to handle and bring into the equation how it can best be tackled. To help prepare compassionate approaches can be applied and combined with other therapies to gradually do this. Then using compassion which is being in touch with one's inner desire to be supportive and helpful to oneself when in this terror state, you might find ways to work with the terror and shock.

Delusions can take over your mind and you get very preoccupied and absorbed with thinking about them. You are not in the here and now. Often with paranoia you cannot switch off from the feeling the neighbours are spying or as in my case passing information back the CIA for causing 9/11. Such thoughts are difficult to ignore even if you overcome the fear. So, it is hard to be insightful of anything else in such a state as I still thought I was in much danger. First steps can be just to try to observe that one is having terrifying thoughts and body feelings of the neighbours talking about you; you try to learn to take one step back and observe "my mind is creating the thoughts and the feelings that my neighbours are talking to me about 9/11".

Paranoia is also sensory overload when it occurs with hallucinations. Images of 9/11 flash through your brain and you hear the explosions of what happened echo in your ears. It is difficult to hear or see anything else. The loud roaring noises and images of destruction stop normal thought processes. So, you cannot think about insight as you completely flip out and are not able to think about anything else, except the fear and pain involved.

It is very difficult to be insightful because of both fear and emotional pain. As there will be little time to prepare for the shock of this and once it happens there maybe little you can do about it until the thoughts and feelings wear off. You will be in the grip of fear until it goes away so there is no way of dealing with it other than trying to find ways to tolerate it. Later in therapy might be that insight and courage requires supported graded exposure.

Going into shock means you are even more insensate. This is the body's way of protecting you. Yet it might still be sensitive to the possibility of compassion for resilience. It is important to prepare for this each time you come out of the shock so to be ready for the next episode. So, then you might be more sensitive to compassionate feelings prompted by others. Yet with the levels of terror involved and courage needed for handling the initial impact means this may not enough on its own. Compassion begins by being empathic and sensitive to one's distress and acknowledging how painful and frightened one is. At this point struggling to be helpful is difficult but again that's light movement back into empathy for distress rather than totally absorbed in it can be helpful. CFT Makes the distinction between the ability to be sensitive to the stress and then the ability to do something about it. These are different processes. Because compassion is tapping into a particular set of brain systems one tries to deliberately create a kind voice in one's head rather than a hostile one; with that kind voice to remind oneself one is in the grip of a paranoid delusion which you have discussed with doctors, and you are aware that others can experience these states too because of how the mind plays these tricks on us; to deliberately focus grounding in the body by noticing how one is standing with feet flat on the floor; trying to slow and focus on the breath; trying to imagine what a compassionate understanding other might say.

You cannot be supported with being exposed to the fear when isolated by paranoia. In my case I had to get away from people as I thought they might be passing information back to the CIA. I used to lock myself away even though you might also feel you are on your own with your problems. Then you might still respond to family help although as in my case I thought I had caused 9/11 so I wondered what else might happen to my family. This could have isolated me further but as I trusted them, they helped me develop some insight into this.

Also, when being so delusional and are hearing voices, you might not notice your safe place when you most need to. Again, the thoughts inside your head can make you very inward so you are less aware. You can be preoccupied by what the voices are saying. So, you cannot take your mind off things to the point where such images cannot be imagined or focused on. Your whole attention will be diverted from such things.

So, the possibilities of distraction are easier said than done. Yet it is still worth a try. Someone talking compassionately to you might get these thoughts from being uppermost in your mind. Yet when hearing voices at the same time, you might not be able to focus on what support workers are saying though some people find listening to music on a Walkman is a way of doing this.

If you are terrified, you will only be peripherally aware of the support worker with you in the paranoid world around you. Your mind will try and run from the here and now. This again will prevent focusing on someone else being insightful with you. Then your mind is completely dissociated so you will need a way of bringing yourself back. You may need someone with you to do this. That may be difficult as you may need to find the courage to confront things. It is much easier to run from them.

All of this will also be system overload so you cannot think coherently or cognitively about the paranoia. The overload may mean you cannot confront it head on. So, there is a need to create a mental space where paranoia can be helped by thinking insightfully. As you begin to calm down you can be more mindful and self-aware. Then you may be able to hear your compassionate inner voice.

The main way of dealing with the terror here is to be sensitive to the suffering and be motivated to do something about it. This will lighten the load and allow you to cope better with it when other strategies are often very difficult. Yet also in the beginning, when you gradually build up to terror, it may be initially necessary to use valium as well. Often these are not prescribed so you will have to find other ways to deal with what you are thinking about.

Trying to solve the problem with responsibility of 9/11 I am totally absorbed in my thinking. So, you are not mindful enough to confront your fears in other ways. Again 9/11 is something that is difficult to ignore. You cannot step back from yourself to question what you are doing. You will be immersed in the delusional thinking as takes over your whole mind. In my case all I am sensible of was the thought of what was going to happen to me as punishment.

You cannot get these thoughts out of your head and the voices won't shut up. So, when having both together it is very doubly difficult to be self-aware and look insightfully at what is happening to you. Your whole mind will be somewhere else. Then you can be completely disorientated from the world around you. Then all your awareness will be overtaken by what you are experiencing. You will need to come out of yourself again before making contact with other people can be effective.

Sometimes it is necessary to try to find a way round these problems. I felt safer with the voices as I believed that if I did something useful, I would be let off for 9/11. So, I spent a lot of time writing and studying and this helped calm me down with the delusions hit. It focused my mind on issues with being intelligent rather than paranoia. Yet when I had some doubts about my abilities, I was still getting the going into shock symptoms, so they still needed dealing using other methods.

You can prepare yourself for a shock in ordinary life but maybe not schizophrenia. It will knock you for six. There is no time to think about it. The shock does not wear off as the symptoms are so frightening. Being in shock can make you further terrorised alongside the

other symptoms causing this lack of insight. So how do you prepare yourself for the shock? Many things can put you into shock but severe schizophrenia when it hits you will go into shock much more deeply.

So, when you are in the grip of fear you cannot shake it off until it passes. It is hard to take deep breaths when you cannot breathe properly and are all tensed up. So, you start to hyperventilate which is difficult to control or otherwise you might be unable to breathe and start to gasp for some air. Then you need to relax so you are not all tensed up but with schizophrenia this is easier said than done. Compassion may be the only way of making breathing exercises possible.

The mind-numbing emotional pain also stops you from being sensitive to other people and imagery. Again you cannot think insightful thoughts at such times as is it all you can be sensible of. You do not feel anything other than the pain. Again, you are in the grip of fear as you could also pass out with the emotional pain. Yet there might be ways to build up to handling the sudden impact of what you are feeling as you learn to build up emotional strength as well.

Often the realization of paranoia is so powerful it can put you much more deeply into shock. It can stun you and again your senses. The impact is often so shattering on your nervous system and being in shock is the body's way of protecting you. If you try to come through this sort of thing using expose therapy this could make you snap again. Then without compassion you might think it better to run to form things instead of being aware of them.

### Compassionate solutions

So, you have to work with the system overload. The whole experience can be overwhelming and too much to handle. You need a coping strategy. Compassion is a way of building strength and can be used to withstand shock. Later this can be used alongside graded supported exposure therapies to try this out. Initially it helps with flipping out and panic attacks when the symptoms are milder. Then as you get stronger and are more able to rest you can learn how to prepare for being in shock.

So, calming down is then difficult and if one over tries to do it one can actually make things more difficult. Compassion seeks instead to also help develop the courage and wisdom to tolerate and be with and not fight with voices and delusional fears. It begins by acknowledging the fear of thinking I was responsible for 9/11 is understandable. In my case I was able to tolerate this by being sensitive to the emotional turmoil and receptive to the fear. So instead of calming I could learn to ground and soothe.

Compassion starts with this recognition of that terror one is in and how painful that is by becoming empathic to one's own distress. Then by working out if any of the cognitive possibilities can help. This is by remembering that these experiences are experienced by other people too and that these experiences are being generated by states of mind etc. So, I could turn to a compassionate emotional state and prevent the mind numbing emotional pain.

Being tolerant of the fear involves receptivity to the suffering. Compassion may be defined as sensitivity to suffering and motivated to do something about it. You can begin to be tolerant of the fear and so ease even the pressure of thinking the CIA were after me, as in my case thinking for causing 9/11. The result was increased resilience and I so learned ways of controlling my brains overloaded threat system. This helped me cope with the extremes of the terror.

The point is that before therapy it's really very hard to know how to be able to cope but what therapy does is it allows you to stand back and start to workout step by step things that could be helpful for you when you get hit by these states of mind. The therapy eventually allowed me to gradually find the courage to stand up for myself and discover my compassionate inner voice which could speak out for me against the terrifying hallucinations criticizing about 9/11.

You can also use the wisdom of compassion. In my therapy I believed I was responsible for killing all those people. Compassion is working on the fact that these are guilt based delusions or delusions of responsibility. These are not that uncommon in psychosis and they are particular brain states that you didn't choose. Soothing the suffering involved easing the burden of this and although I still thought I was responsible for the atrocity it took a weight off my mind.

It will also stop fear of the voices so you can think how to answer them. It can give you strength to resist what you are hearing both in terms of the emotional pain and the fear they cause. Part of the shock you will experience is emotional and again compassion can make you emotionally stronger here too. Then once you calm down you can soothe this with insight. This soothing of the emotional pain is just as important as dealing with fear as both can make you pass out.

You will be physically exhausted by having to confront things, but compassion can help you here too. As you learn to soothe the anxiety and fear so you won't feel so drained. This is also important for developing the strength needed to withstand the next shock. Not eating and sleeping properly with fear leaves you physically worn out. Yet once you return to a stronger physically state you will feel more like taking on the challenges with schizophrenia.

Your compassion with yourself can directly contradict and counteract your spoiled self-image from the voices and delusions. Again, this is a way of building emotional strength as you won't feel so bad about yourself. It will show you an image of yourself that you can picture so you will be emotionally stronger, which should have a calming effect. This helps you get through things so you can prepare better. It will be difficult in that visual hallucinations will prevent doing this when in crisis.

As we have seen you will also be terrified to think rationally. So, insight will be very difficult. You will have to be logical about this. Yet this will get easier once you start to cope with the fear through compassion breathing and safe place imagery. Normal thought patterns should resume. Then you will be in a position to question things when they start happening and be able to remember what the cognitive therapist said. You will feel a bit safer, which should calm you down further.

It might also sometimes be a case of hanging in there before you can use the insight. So much will depend on how much courage you have got so this might not always be possible. It is often difficult to find courage as schizophrenia can be so severe. In my case it was helpful that the symptoms varied in intensity so some courage was possible at the more moderate levels of anxiety to calm down and have a therapeutic rest from things. So, insight was then more possible at these times.

If you let it go over your head, then in some ways you are less aware so you might feel it too frightening to change this. Then it can still make you frightened but if you don't confront things they will never get better. Will you take the risk of snapping with this? Yet it might also give compassion some opportunity to prevent this happening, so it is easier to confront things. This will help you cope with the reduced fear the overload causes and help you confront the rest when it comes back.

You can combine safe place imagery and compassionate self-image. You can focus all your senses on these using a photograph of yourself looking compassionate in your safe place. Like Gilberts example of the strawberry to focus on you can focus on your self-image at the same time in the photo. This will bring back soothing memories of visiting your safe place. Then if you use all your senses in the same way, you will become more receptive despite having gone into shock.

You have got to learn not to flip out and if you think you have caused 9/11 this thought will certainly do it. Thinking you could have done something like an atrocity will make you freak. So, to stop flipping out you have got to learn not to overreact. Yet this was difficult in my case as my feelings of thinking I was responsible for 9/11 were so serious my overreactions felt normal. Yet once you realise you deserve compassion this emotional thought can be dealt with.

All this can be difficult when the delusion hits you as you need to learn not to panic. The more you practice anxiety management the less likely you are to panic at the first signs of the symptoms. You can then think about them more coherently. Again, this depends on severity. In my case thinking you were going to be punished for 9/11 would probably panic anybody. So, this reaction was again something difficult to prevent even when using breathing exercises for the hypoventilation.

Finally, it might be better not to think about it head on and try to be distracted. Yet you need to be mindful of something to be distracted. Yet if you can try to put these thoughts to the back of your mind this might help you think about something else. The problem is that thinking you are going to be punished for 9/11 is a difficult thought to ignore. Yet with cognitive and compassion approaches together taking you mind off things is going to stand much more chance.

The problem schizophrenia you still might not be able to build all this up gradually using with the compassion therapy. So, when it hits you it knocks you for six you often can gradually prepare for these extremes. Then you need to prepare yourself for a major shock. You will need a baptism by fire. Yet with schizophrenia you cannot always do this as it is easier said than done. So might still be overwhelmed. Yet with compassionate solutions this stands more of a chance.

Compassionate focused therapy can be usefully integrated with other approaches to schizophrenia. Gilbert describes some ways of developing compassion such as using body exercises to help stimulate the vagus nerve and thinking practises such as considering the qualities one would have if one could be at one's compassionate best; how might one be more courageous or empathic when in a high distressed state. How would one like to help somebody else in the same state as oneself? How would you help them with their resistance to you help? We focus on 'like to' because we realise that we might not be able to; so it's focusing on what we would like to be able to do even if we thought we couldn't do it. How could one practise those qualities Compassion has to be available to us when we need it most. Compassion can be combined with other approaches such as distraction and exposure therapy as well as by using cognitive and voice dialogue approaches. It is helpful to know how these different approaches can be integrated to achieve the best results. Compassion involves the working out how to do it because often the wisdom of what to do has to be worked out step by step based on how things are helpful to oneself. There is no one-size-fits-all.

Of key importance in compassion focused therapy is that the approach can help to observe and tolerate the stress caused by schizophrenia, but not over focusing on soothing which can lead to more problems and therefore tolerating is the first step. The problem with the illness is that once you have the psychosis, it perpetuates itself. So, developing resilience is of key importance. Again, compassion can utilize other ways to reduce stress in combination. Many other things can be helpful including friendship and loving support from family which again adds to the combined range of therapies. The fact that these are helpful shows how important receiving compassion from others is.

In my case I was afraid to go out in case people would read my mind about 9/11 and informing the CIA about me. That meant hiding away at home and unable to go out for many years. Using compassion to overcome these depressing and terrifying problems helped to get out and about. Yet it required integrated approaches before life could get back to normal. This article identifies the processes to go through where these approaches can be usefully combined in different ways.

### Getting out and about

The first thing is that Improved sleep from compassion can reduce nightmares. You won't be so tired and exhausted to try to confront the anxiety. Having proper sleep allows a break from the symptoms and will give you the strength and courage to get over the doorstep. Then the same is needed for being around other people that make you paranoid. You may still be physically drained for doing all this as for example the fear stops you eating. Yet compassion can help here too.

Then compassionate graded exposure can begin to slowly help you to calm you down. It allows you to coexist with that is tolerate the fear. You can then begin to think about the insight your compassionate inner voice can give you. This may need many other strategies for calming down such as someone coming with you. Then being distracted by someone talking you through this will take your mind off the paranoid thoughts when out. So, at the most difficult times when out and about you are not preoccupied.

Confrontation means not being too overwhelmed which enables you to think more rationally and contemplate the paranoia. You need cognitive insight *in situ* when it hits you and compassion allows you to withstand the shock. Eventually this allows you to practice getting out and about on your own since if you don't collapse with the fear you don't need someone to go with you. It is more pleasurable to be able to do things on your own sometimes without always being dependent on other people and this is something significant that can be recorded in the pleasure diary.

All this does require a back up plan like going back to the car which is for me was a place to get over and come out of the shocks caused by going out. Then the compassion, rooted in the desire to be understanding, helpful and kind to oneself, can help you get over this to try and engage with things again. You need a feeling of safety to do this and back in the car I felt protected. This has a calming effect when out and together with the compassion so you are not so preoccupied with thinking of what could happen is the stress triggered a psychotic episode.

You can get over the doorstep with compassion. There is a psychological barrier here and taking a few deep breathes is not enough. Soothing can help you deal with this so you can put this thought to the back of your mind. Once you have done this you can visualize the next step of doing the same when faced with being around people that may make you paranoid. Then even the places where the most paranoid memories might trigger a relapse can be sized up psychologically in the same way. Key is to try as best one can to create an inner emotional tone of wanting to be supportive and helpful to oneself.

The compassion allows you to control the fight flight response so you can keep calms instead of running. This takes some practice as escaping is often needed. So, you first need to learn how to react with compassion instead. It will still take some courage to help things along. This again can be built up with supported graded exposure. You will learn not to attract attention to yourself in case anyone notices your thoughts about 9/11. Then with practice doing this it becomes easier to blend in and remain anonymous without drawing attention to yourself.

When out the compassion will take the edge of the fear so you don't start staring at people and drawing attention to yourself from anybody who might identify you for causing 9/11. Then you can start enjoying getting out and about. You can do the things everyone else does normally which will be good for the pleasure diary. It also allowed me to put the thoughts about 9/11 to the back of mind so they were less visible to the people I was paranoid about when practicing this.

Often a really bad experience could put you off going back out permanently. It will be a case of once bitten twice shy, where you have to wait until forget the shock. So again the mental barrier will return at this point and will become a major obstacle. You might think you have tried the exposure and it isn't working. Yet crucially the compassion can help you calm down after a bad episode so you don't have to wait to see if the fear wears off before you give things another try.

Exposure still requires much courage to go out and especially may not be enough when you are on your own. Initially if you pass out with the fear you need a back up plan and valium might be necessary. Then with the support in the background you can test the water here and try the compassion when out confronting things by yourself. It will work for some time until you call for help. Yet with enough practice you will get to the point where your periods of self-sufficiency become longer and more frequent.

### Day centres

Distraction can occur better when you are out and about and compassion gives you the courage to do this which is needed for the pleasure diary. It isn't much fun being sat at home all day. There the distraction will be much harder as being confined at home all the time concentrates your mind on the voices. The compassion and going out crucially allowed me to get to day centres, albeit with a volunteer driver. So, there were more chances of keeping on a course than round the house.

Once you are getting out with the compassion it is vital next for participating in day centres. The mental space it creates is enough to concentrate on the educational courses there. Also, as the voices become more muted it is easier to have the strength for focusing on something else. Having a rest from the symptoms by being distracted in this way is very therapeutic. In addition, there are often relaxation classes which will effectively add to the calming effects of compassion.

Being able to have such a space in my mind free from the delusional thoughts meant I could think more clearly and I was able to get completely absorbed in educational courses. This is better than merely keeping busy and is much more effective. Despite some residual anxiety remaining it made me less aware of the voices and delusions. This again was more effective than putting the paranoid thoughts to the back of my mind as it put them out of my mind nearly completely.

Again, this was very important for the pleasure diary as the delusional anxiety never went away completely. Usually with trying my mind off things there was still problems with low mood which again made pleasure so important. At this point I also started to enjoy the distracting activities by talking about them with new friends which more which became a much more powerful force for pleasure. Again I could get completely absorbed in this as well the courses on offer.

### Pleasure diary

Pleasure diaries can start by making decisions to notice small pleasures such as, getting into bed and feeling warm, or the taste of first meal of the day, or noticing the foods you like, the taste of chocolate maybe, or the piece of music you like in comparison to music you don't. Our different senses of sight, hearing, touch, taste and so on can give slightly different pleasures. Noticing the sensory pleasures, no matter how small, is shifting your brain just slightly. First steps are often small steps of tuning our attention. It helps also if one can tolerate with compassion when using your pleasure diary. Another tip can be for you to write down your positive thoughts as these will help you reflect on your life and remind you that the symptoms may pass even when you get back to the house. Crucial is you create a kind tone when you're writing down those thoughts so they're not just written down as logical. Practising in a kind and supportive tone to your thoughts is very important. After that compassion can help you keep positive and distracted in your own place which will help with taking your mind off things, such as by watching and concentrating a video whilst having a takeaway or a few drinks. If you do that once again don't do these things mindlessly but noticing you having the takeaway and noticing If you are enjoying the tastes and textures of eating it and so on. Is it sweet enough or salty enough etc.

Being at home too much can still be depressing so an effective pleasure diary may not be possible until you practice the exposure therapy. The mind concentrates on the voices so pleasure is much less possible indoors. Yet once you have built had the courage to go out it is more possible to challenge the symptoms when back. Then there is more possibility of being distracted at home so you can concentrate on pleasurable things to do around the house, despite the confines. Doing things deliberately because you think they will bring you some sensory pleasure is also an important step. For example deliberately going to the shop to buy some chocolate (or whatever) because you know it's something you want and will enjoy is a deliberate positive act. Or deliberately phoning somebody because you want to talk to them it's a deliberate positive act. Again, it's doing things mindfully knowingly rather than automatically.



Compassion will open up your emotions which is extremely good for the pleasure diary. So, you will have family relations especially with the kids as well enjoying family occasions like birthdays and Christmas. The overall result of having emotional support will help any depression from schizophrenia when simple pleasurable things will have less effect. These feelings of belonging are very powerful and with compassion too you will once again feel less pain from the voices.

So being part of a group of friends will give a pleasurable feeling of belonging which will become deeper and more profound as the group grows organically over time. Again, you will feel emotionally grounded and less vulnerable to emotional turmoil from the delusions of 9/11. Compassion allows the possibility of meeting new partners. Then you will find some more powerful fulfilment which is deeper than distraction through activities you enjoy with keeping busy at the day centre.

It is ok to be distracted but to do this you often it helps to find something to enjoy to make it work; one learns to work on a 'I want to or would prefer to' not on 'have to' 'ought' or 'should'. Otherwise, things become a chore and are not so pleasurable. This depends on the individual person and it is significant that day centres have plenty of choice. Yet often when much effort is still involved for doing something you enjoy. So, you will have to build up gradually and regard this as another challenge. The feeling of optimism and accomplishment are again very pleasurable.

Distraction doesn't mean just studying things or keeping busy as this takes a lot of effort when you are ill. So, you need to include very simple things like having a pleasurable chat with a friends when out and about as in coffee shops or restaurants. Then the compassionate feel of the conversation in friendship can be very engrossing and is good for taking your mind off things. So, compassion will calm you down and the conversation will distract you which is a very powerful combination.

### Other approaches

Breathing in ways that help settle the body and work on the nervous system is also recommended by Gilbert but finding the pattern that works for you, and this may change over time, can be difficult especially if you are uptight or hyperventilating. It's quite useful to go on the internet and look for vagal breathing or soothing breathing practises and see which ones you like. Also having people guide you through them can be helpful rather than just doing it yourself. Then until you can get out of the house breathing is going to be very difficult and it helps to go out for a walk to relax with nature. Then breathing will be more possible and easier when not restricted to an enclosed space indoors. Again, this requires some courage and support until you can learn to do this by yourself. It can also be combined with doing some exercise which is also good as take more deep breaths in the wide-open spaces.

The safe place imagery becomes vital to practicing the breathing exercises when at home. If you are so frightened that you can hardly breathe because you associate the confines with the suffering you go through. So, you need a plan to change the feel of the place. Here the pleasure diary becomes very important as again you can replace the austere feel with happy memories. You can then also have your compassionate friends around and give your home a house warming.

You need a way of helping your living environment feel more safe and how compassion can help soothe these feelings when in your own place. So, the safe place imagery has more of a chance in there too. Then it is better to be living in your safe place as it takes less effort than trying to imagine another as the effects are more on going than just doing this image periodically. The anxiety is an ongoing thing with schizophrenia so you are going to need something more permanent in order to relax.

Lots of things can be soothing and compassion is only one. The fact of new friendship means you can talk through your problems with them. It helps just to talk things over and you will feel better afterwards. Emotional support can soothe the pain form the voices and having friends is a very soothing feeling. Like the compassion it takes some of the pressure off which is important as schizophrenia is stress induced. So, friends and family support are a useful combination.

Sharing your problems with new friends helps lighten the load which resembles the way the empathic compassion therapy is designed to work. It can take a weight off on your mind. You will feel much better and less stressed out if you have someone to off load on. There will be less to worry about once you have talked things through and the whole process should leave you more relaxed as things with schizophrenia may not be so bad as they seem.

Then once you start to feel more relaxed with your compassionate friends they can help with the distracting and confronting approaches. Again, this good for doing things socially which will help ease your mind as you learn that is possible to have a break from being caught up with the paranoia. This soothing with your friends means the pleasure diary will stand more success if you can take your mind off things by chatting about them first.

If the anxiety comes back at some point your friends or family will just be a telephone call away. Yet they cannot provide 24/7 and with continual anxiety you may have to find combining the compassion therapy with other things that might also be soothing. This is what makes the pleasure diary so important as it helps fill the time in when there is nothing else to do. So as in my case your thoughts don't drift back to thinking about 9/11. Yet it still requires something various to do each day.

As I have noted, moment and action rather than thinking can be helpful. Going for a walk through beautiful natural surroundings is something you can do every day. Nature is very soothing and can be used to great effect in combination with the emotional soothing the compassion therapy is designed to achieve. If you have trees around it can help to imagine feeling connected to the trees or that the trees welcome you and sometimes even touching the tree can be helpful. Crucially this is something you can do on your own so it will fill much time in when your friends and family are too busy or otherwise unavailable. This is potent combination of relaxation and pleasure which can help with soothing.

I have also seen some people with schizophrenia get married and can soothe the emotional pain of schizophrenia in powerful ways. Having your own family as the functionalist sociologists point out is like getting into a warm bath and again this is another form of soothing. In my case being unmarried I still find it soothing to be around the family I grew up with as this has much the same effect. Again, pleasurable compassion is only one way of soothing anxiety and depression.

Eventually there will be a need to do things on your own with friends or family and when you have a lot of time on your hands. Then many other things can be soothing for being around the house. Watching a favorite movie or listening to a piece of music can also be very soothing and like a having a friendly chat can engage you with a story or lyrics. You will react in the same way as being with your friends as being emotionally involved with the media can make you respond in the same way.

### **Your compassionate inner voice**

The voices will change the way you see yourself especially if there is some truth in what they say. Yet the compassionate self image will give you positive reinforcement as it is a new found positive way of being and seeing yourself. Your compassionate friends and family will also identify you in the same way which will increase positive reinforcement from the image. In the end you will be able to give yourself compassionate reinforcement and use the image more effectively.

The better you feel about yourself the more there is a chance to build on the cognitive therapy which does the same thing through developing insight. You will gradually use your compassionate self image here as you will be thinking in more balanced ways. This should also overcome negative reinforcement from the voices. Yet it is important that it can be combined with the therapist getting to know you so they can reinforce your good points while also being compassionate about your difficulties.

With your compassionate voice tones you will eventually overcome any submissiveness and you will have a new way of standing up for yourself. This can be used together with some supported graded courage. Then as your compassionate inner voice may start with being relative quiet you will come to learn to assert yourself along the way using the exposure therapy which has given you that strength. Then you will get more confident in your opposition to the voices criticizing you and be more assertive.

This initial use of exposure therapy works so that you stand more chance of hearing your own voice in the first place. Once you have found your compassionate inner voice the courage you have learned can then be used to supplement you in resisting what you are hearing. So cognitive therapy may not be enough to stand up to the voice without the courage of having someone on your side to support you with the exposure to the fear.

Once you are emotionally stronger with using the compassion against the voices the more you can again put them to the back of your mind. Then you wont be so anxious that what they are criticizing you for is true which will help you calm down. This is another way that distraction can begin. You wont be so bothered about what you are hearing which will help you concentrate. This means you can gain self esteem for the courage you display and add the achievement to the pleasure diary.

The compassionate exposure therapy will enable you to explore your self identity. Then learning about yourself is therapeutically important as the more you know yourself the more grounded you become in your life. The process of discovering and rediscovering who you are is also very interesting and should be the main source of distraction in our lives. Day centers can support you in this by running classes in self growth and should help with generating more and more cognitive insight.

So, compassion calms you down and so leads to self study. You can see yourself much better and will know your good points. Then you can question if you really could have caused 9/11. Yet the inner voice may not be enough on its own as you might be getting mixed messages. You may need reinforcement from a cognitive therapist together with friends and family. As you meditate on yourself more and talk through the insight this generates the clearer the picture of yourself will be.

### Conclusion

In sum compassion focused therapy is a powerful way of learning how to tolerate, try and step back from and settle the fear and emotional pain in schizophrenia. It can be enhanced by other forms of pleasurable soothing as you make new friends, keep busy at day centres or confront getting out and about for distraction. These relationships stimulate our caring system which in turn as a direct effect on soothing the threat system. Various forms of support are needed to find the courage to go out to achieve all this. These also include integrating cognitive and voice dialogue processes. Then once you build it up your courage and insight you can begin to challenge the voice and find the strength to speak out for yourself.

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