Facilitating Compassion Focused Dialogues

The following statements serve as useful prompts during compassion focused dialogues and help deepen compassion towards the self or other individuals.

- **Witness/acknowledge (sensitivity to suffering, non-judgement)**
  ‘I can see that you are feeling/thinking etc.....’

- **Understand/empathise**
  ‘It makes sense you feel this way because....’

- **Clarify motivation**
  ‘What I want for you is....’

- **Clarify feeling towards**
  ‘I feel.....to see you having difficulty’

- **Clarify need (unmet)**
  ‘Given that you are feeling...what you need is....’

- **Key message you want the person to know/hear**
  ‘I want you to know that you can/are....’

- **Redirecting and broadening attention or highlighting memory**
  ‘It might be helpful to remember...’; ‘It might be helpful to focus on....’

- **Predict, understand and plan for blocks to compassion**
  ‘Hearing this I imagine you are feeling...but this is understandable because....’

- **Compassionate way of responding behaviourally**
  ‘It might be helpful to try....’

**Facilitation notes:**

- It can be helpful to start with witnessing/acknowledging the experiences of the person or ‘self’ in the opposite chair. This relatively neutral first step can help to prime the client’s response before moving to more affect-laden stages where blocks can be encountered.

- It can also be helpful to expect, predict and normalise the client’s blocks, fears or resistance to compassion. Such reactions to compassion can then be met with
understanding and provide a source of therapeutic insight (e.g. ‘given what you’ve been through, it makes sense that you would feel hesitant trusting others’).

- In compassion focused therapy, compassion is never applied ‘cold’ but is preceded by intentionally accessing and embodying the client’s ‘compassionate self’. This often involves the use of soothing-rhythm breathing, changes to posture and facial expression, and a focus on the qualities and motivation of compassion.

Citation:


For further chairwork guidelines and facilitation notes visit www.chairwork.co.uk