

## Switching our minds to kindness and compassion 173

As we go through this book we will be looking at your thoughts and behaviors. However, we will be doing this compassionately and you will often find that I suggest you create a gentle and kind position in your mind as you come to look at your thoughts and behaviors.

### KEY POINTS

We have gone through some useful compassion-focusing exercises, derived from ancient wisdoms and practices and modern research, which focus on:

- compassion flowing out from you to others
- compassion flowing into you from others
- compassion for yourself.

Keep in mind these should be thought of as behavioral experiments, to see what happens if you put time and effort into practising. Each of these exercises may help stimulate part of your mind and brain that will help with bringing balance to your feelings and moods. Work through each one even if some are more difficult than others.

### EXERCISES

#### **Exercise 1: Building your compassionate image**

This exercise is to help you build up a compassionate image for you to work with, and develop key areas of your mind. You can have more than one image if you wish, and they may well change over time. Whatever image comes to mind, or you choose to work with, note that it is your creation and therefore your own personal ideal – what you would really like from feeling cared for and cared about. In this practice it is important that you give your image certain qualities, including wisdom, strength, warmth, and a non-judgemental attitude.

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For each box below think of these qualities and imagine what they would look, sound or feel like.

### TABLE 8.1 BUILDING YOUR COMPASSIONATE IMAGE: WORKSHEET

How would you like your ideal compassionate image to look – visual qualities?

How would you like your ideal compassionate image to sound (e.g. voice tone)?

What other sensory qualities can you give to it?

How would you like your ideal compassionate image to relate to you?

How would you like to relate to your ideal compassionate image?

If possible, begin by focusing on your breathing, finding your calming rhythm and making a half smile. Then let images emerge in the mind as best you can – do not try too hard. If nothing comes to mind, or your mind wanders, gently bring it back to the breathing and practise compassionate acceptance.

Here are some questions that might help you build an image:

- Would you want your caring/nurturing image to feel/look/seem old or young; male or female, or non-human – an animal, sea or light?
- What colours and sounds are associated with the qualities of wisdom, strength, warmth and non-judgement?

Indeed, if you only have a sense of a compassionate colour surrounding you that feels warm and caring, that's a good start. Remember, your colour and image has compassion *for you*.

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**TABLE 8.2 COMPASSIONATE PRACTICE DIARY**

	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
Compassionate self (directed to self and/or others)							
Compassionate image							

In each box note the time and for how long you practised, what you found helpful and any other useful or interesting reflections.

**Exercise 2: Experiments to try out**

- See which you find easier: creating compassion by imagining being a compassionate self, and/or creating an ideal image that has compassion for you.
- What do you feel if you alter the gender of your compassionate image? This exercise is not helpful to everyone, so only practice what you feel is helpful.

These exercises can also be used as meditation practice, where you put time aside in a quiet space, but also wherever you can focus your mind, e.g., in a break at work or on the bus.