



## **Soothing Hand: introduction to clients, exercise and close / reflections – Dr Kristy Potter**

This is a well-known exercise that includes applying self-compassion. This is helpful for those experiencing Chronic Pain, fostering an acceptance via this act of self-compassion. This is adjusted from many of the versions online, perhaps most notably Russ Harris's.

### *Introduction to clients:*

Okay so we're going to do an exercise together now which focuses on compassion. As we've already talked about in just the few sessions that we've started together one thing that's really important is how we respond to ourselves when we're in pain and this idea of struggling with the pain trying to not feel the pain actually can lead to more pain but also leading to quite compassionate response to ourselves. This can lead to more suffering. So for a moment, are you open to trying this out, and seeing what happens?

### *Exercise:*

- I'd like you to find yourself a comfortable position so you know preferably one that's good for you with your specific kind of pain / difficulties.
- I just want you to bring to mind the pain
- OK so take a few moments just to reflect on the nature of the pain when it shows up and what that feels like in your body:
- I'd like you to consider how that pain is affecting you now
- Think about what might happen in the future without pain and just notice what difficult thoughts and feelings arise with this
- I'm just going to get you to draw your attention to the area of your body where you feel that most strongly so that might be the area of pain it might also be the area where your emotions are showing up for these thoughts, feelings, sensations or the pain itself
- *Pause here – 5-10 seconds*
- I just asked you about how it affects you and how it might affect your future so we once again I'm just draw your attention to the area in your body where you feel that most strongly





- Now I'd like you to take one of your hands and imagine that it's the hand of someone very kind and caring; could have been a parent, a nurse, a friend or it could be somebody imaginary.... just imagine that this is the hand of someone who is very kind and very caring
- I want you to place this hand gently on whichever part of your body you feel this discomfort / suffering the most... perhaps you feel right in your chest or your stomach... wherever it's most intense.
- Just for a moment when you place your hand there... just allow your hand to rest there lightly and gently... noticing how this feels against your skin or against your clothes.... feel the warmth, the comfort, flowing from your palm into your body and imagine that as this happens as that warmth flows into your body... your body kind of opens up, softens, loosens, and makes space around this sensation to the incoming compassionate
- I want you to hold your pain, your suffering, whatever it is, very gently as if it's a crying baby or whimpering puppy... I just want you to leave your hand there for a few seconds... I want you to imagine that with the warmth that flows from your hand is kindness, care and compassion... as you're leaving your hand there, notice if your mind hooking you in to any judgments, urges, thoughts or feelings... just notice them and draw your attention back to the feeling of your hand on your body... in the act of being caring and compassionate towards yourself.
- *Pause with your client, giving the occasional prompt*
- When you're ready I'm going to draw attention back to room.

*Closing / reflections with clients:*

Consider with your client what thoughts / feelings / urges showed up?

How did they respond to these?

What happened to the sensation? *Note, the aim is not to change the sensation but it can be helpful to be curious about this.*

Was it the pain that showed up? The suffering? Judgements? Future predictions?  
*Note, this is also a good way to separate out the various interoceptive experiences of the pain, suffering etc.*

