Flourishing Mindset Strategies

Compassionate Thinking Using a Graphic Organizer

Building a Flourishing Mindset through Thoughtful Empowering Learning and Coaching
A Flourishing Mindset can be described as the thinking habits that support sustained well-being. To possess a Flourishing Mindset, certain thinking behaviours are necessary. These thinking behaviours result from an intentional and conscious desire to maximize the well-being of self and others and are designed to guide decisions on how to act to optimize the likelihood of meeting your well-being goals.

Being Compassionate

The term compassionate literally means "to suffer together"[1]. Compassionate acts are motivated by an awareness of one's own suffering, or the suffering of others, that results in an understanding of, and a desire to relieve that suffering.

Compassionate Thinking

This thinking behaviour guides decisions on how to act compassionately, whether it's to oneself or others. Choosing to be compassionate involves two important decision-making steps.

Step 1: Creating a conscious awareness of the nature of suffering being experienced.

Step 2: Choosing to actively do something to alleviate the suffering.

To show compassion to oneself or someone else, the decision about how to act compassionately involves criteria. Criteria for acting compassionately:

Evidence-based: *drawing on clues or evidence based on the physical and emotional characteristics, and the actions of the person who is suffering*;

Consistent: *connecting the clues and evidence to best infer the form of suffering being experienced* (physical, emotional, mental, psychological);

Empathetic: *understanding the effects of this form of suffering on the person;*

For example, a person who expresses hopelessness; shows a loss of interest or increased fatigue or sleep problems, is anxious (nervous, tense, restless, feelings of panic or dread, increased heart rate, breathing, sweating, muscle twitching);Isolates themselves; or has trouble focusing or thinking clearly; may be suffering from depression.[2]

Impactful: *responding appropriately to alleviate this suffering, if you are able to do so without making the situation worse. Note that* sometimes the best action to take when being compassionate is to take no action.

Important *Not to Do's*:

When deciding to act compassionately to oneself or others, it is also necessary to make sure the following are kept front of mind:

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- ***do not be harshly critical and judgmental*** of oneself or the person you hope to be compassionate towards; you can't be truly compassionate if you do so. The only thing you want to judge is how well your decision-making process, using the above criteria, is helping you be compassionate.
- ***do not isolate and alienate*** those who are suffering; suffering is an integral part of humanity; we all suffer in some way or another. Knowing this can help bring people together.
- ***do not presume that every person suffers in the same way;***
- ***do not ignore suffering or exaggerate it***; doing so will prevent you from truly understanding the suffering and responding to it in the most appropriate way.[3]

Implications for Online Interactions:

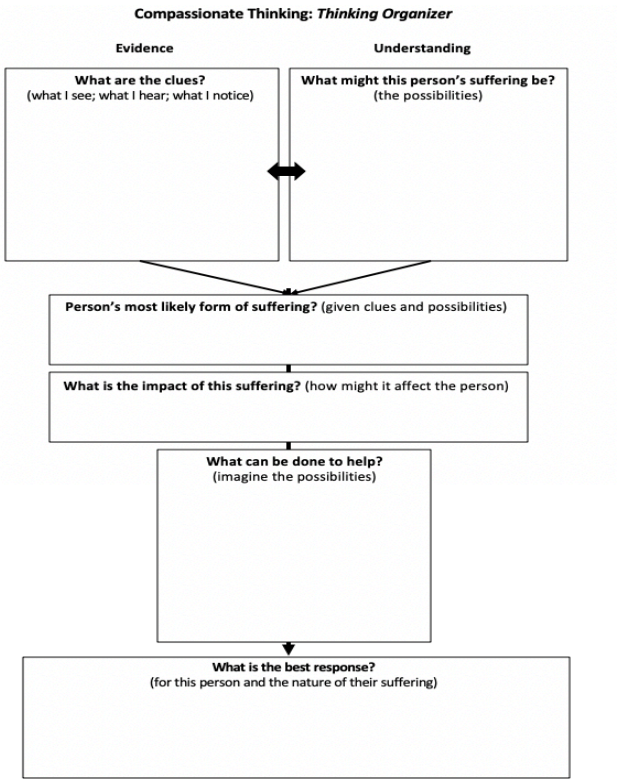
- be sure to clearly see and hear the person's physical and emotional qualities, and their actions, as much as possible
- pay close attention to every detail including physical features, expressions and tone of voice
- provide time to pause and think about how the person is suffering and how it's affecting them; try not to be distracted by your own thoughts and feelings, or other things going on around you.

A Strategy for Compassionate Thinking

Graphic Organizer

This strategy can be used to structure thinking. Ask, and record answers to the following questions:

- What are the clues/evidence? (What do I see? What do I hear? What do I notice?)
- What might this person's suffering be? Record several possibilities.
- What is this person's suffering? Choose the most likely form of suffering from your brainstormed list--infer it and name it.
- What might be the impact of this suffering? Understand as best you can the effects of suffering this way.
- What is the most compassionate response (to best alleviate the suffering)?



[1] https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/topic/compassion/definition
[2] https://www.healthline.com/health/depression/recognizing-symptoms#anxiety
[3] Adapted from: https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/try_selfcompassion/

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