Self-Compassion in Parenting

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The Present Study

Sample
- 61 parents (M= 38.41, SD= 6.11), with at least one child between the ages of 2-12. There were 50 female and 11 male.

This Study:
- Parents were randomly assigned to complete one of two audio guided recordings:
  - Loving-Kindness Meditation (LKM; adapted from a Buddhist Meditation to encourage self-compassion.) Encourages participants to direct a number of phrases; “May I be safe, May I be happy, may I be healthy, may I live with ease”, towards the self and others.
  - Focused Imagery Exercise (FI; used as a standard control against LKM.) Encourages participants to visualise parts of their body i.e. face, nose, before visualising parts of the face and body of a family member and friend.

Dependent Measures:
- Parents completed the Self-Compassion Scale (SCS; Neff, 2003), Compassion to Others Scale (CS; Pommier, 2011) and a scale developed by the study: Self-Compassion Motivation.

Vignettes
Parents then received a set of six vignettes, detailing six childhood problems a Parent might encounter as they shop for groceries. For example throwing a tantrum DVs Parents reported their likelihood of experiencing a set of emotions and self-compassionate cognitions, and likelihood of using a set of behavioural strategies (e.g. use a distraction task).

Results
81% of Parents found LKM to be an acceptable parenting strategy
- 60% said they would use it once a week
- Parents who received LKM reported higher levels of: Self-Compassion, Compassion & Self-Compassion Motivation.
- Parents who received LKM reported fewer negative emotions and cognitions in response to the Vignettes.

Context
Self-compassion is positively associated with a number of adaptive and protective traits (i.e. well-being & positive affect). However its influence within a parenting population, and by extension families, remains unknown.

The benefits of encouraging self-compassion might be two-fold not only improving parents’ well-being but helping them to develop a calmer and more compassionate response to the distress of their child.

The study:
The aim of this study was to introduce self-compassion into parenting, to assess parents’ responsiveness to a Loving-Kindness Meditation, and explore the influence that this had on their subsequent responses to hypothetical problem child behaviours.

Conclusion
- LKM was both a successful and acceptable practice for encouraging self-compassion in parents.
- It not only encouraged parents to develop greater levels of self-compassion and compassion. But encouraged more positive emotional and cognitive responses when faced with the distress of their child.
- These findings have implications for thinking about ways that we can best support parents in practice, with LKM offering a way to help parents manage their own distress, and also the distress of their child.

References:
- Neff, K. D. (2003a). Development and validation of a scale to measure self

- Kirby, J. N. (2015). The role of mindfulness and compassion in

- Evidence

- A proof

- A loving kindness meditation to target affect in mood disorders:

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