

Developing micro skills of compassionate communication to facilitate group work with undergraduate students



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Acknowledgements:

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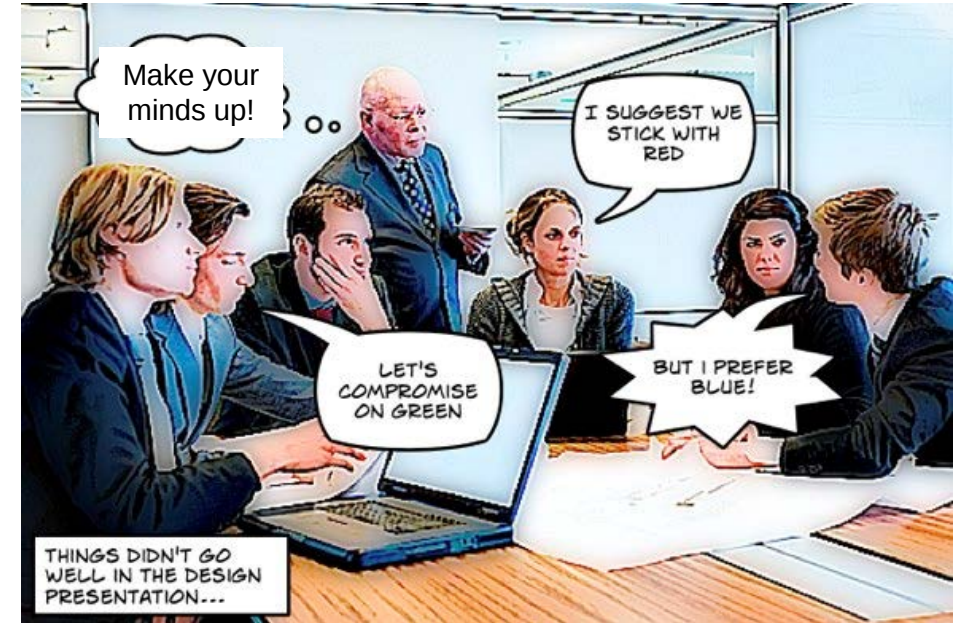
Dr Theo Gilbert & Karen Clarke, University of Hertfordshire

Micro Skills of Compassionate Communication (MSCC)

- Compassionate Mind Training (CMT) in UK education offers potential for greater psychological wellbeing for staff and students (Welford, 2013)
- Informal feedback shows improved staff wellbeing, student behaviour and parental engagement (Welford and Langmead, 2015)
- Teaching and support staff showed improved wellbeing (Maratos et al., 2019 a)
- Embedding compassion in HE impacts on emotional wellbeing and feelings of inclusion (Gibbs, 2017, Maratos et al., 2019b and Harvey et al. (in press)
- Gilbert, T (2017) identified small communicative behaviours which enhance group work and cohesion
- The pedagogy enables students to develop strategies to ensure all students are able to engage in group discussions and foster a sense of support and belonging.

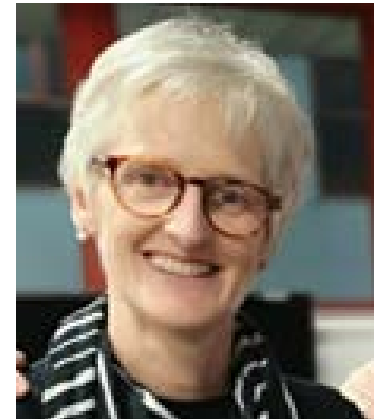
Embedding MSCC at UoD

- Large UG Psychology module
- Emphasis on group work and group assessment
- Recognition that things don't always go smoothly!
- Noticed a lack of compassion
- Implement MSCC within a level 4 psychology module
- Assess the impact that the approach has on student wellbeing and experience of group work



Putting it into practice: training

- Training provided by Theo Gilbert and Karen Clark, University of Hertfordshire to all staff on the module
- Fortnightly module team meetings with staff to discuss the CMSC approach and any issues
- Weekly debrief following teaching to identify any concerns and allow time to make changes to materials for the following week



What did we do in class?

Clear focus on what is compassion:

Noticing distress or disadvantage in others or yourself.....



.....And....

Doing something about it

Reiterated in subsequent weeks...

Putting it into practice: avoiding cliques



Unhelpful group behaviours



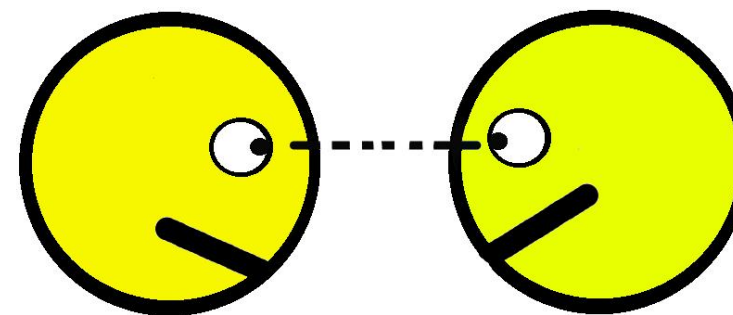
Helpful group behaviours



Developing strategies



Eye-Contact



Focus group feedback staff and students



Key points

- Really liked the mixing of the groups – expanded network
- Raised self awareness - recognising how they behave in group settings
- Enabled monopolisers to monitor and address their group input
- Positive benefits for shy and nervous students
- Students more compassionate towards one another
- Evidence of transfer of skills to other modules and beyond
- Used it outside of university – dance school, home, friendships

For the future

- Would like more video examples of behaviours rather than role play
- Would like to continue in other modules

Next steps

- Development of video examples
 - Helpful and unhelpful group behaviours
 - Examples of how to challenge unhelpful behaviour
- Video example: [Addressing an alpha pair](#)
- Will use these in teaching this year
- Develop training package for staff to enable roll out

Please email me c.Harvey@derby.ac.uk for further information

References

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