



CFT

Regulating negative emotions into positive ones can be learned, practised and mastered.

As a coach, counselor and consultant, I have a duty to “practise what I teach” but also notice when I do not meet my performance expectations. Compassion Focused Therapy (CFT) has become an indispensable tool for myself. Its daily practice has been helpful in the last ten years of my life, given the challenges that I have had to overcome in my professional and personal life.

Developed by the British psychologist, Paul Gilbert in the early 2000s, TFC seeks to integrate cognitive behavioral therapy techniques with concepts of Buddhist philosophy and neuroscience (scientific studies of the nervous system).

Simply put, CFT aims to improve your well-being through developing compassion for yourself and others. Recognizing your humanity, developing kindness for yourself and observing your inner experiences without making value judgments are the three important components of CFT.

If you are watching a TV program on the food channel for example, your gastric juices and your stomach will start to react to the images. Replaying the show in your head later in bed will have the same effect.

This analogy demonstrates that what you think has a decisive influence on the functioning of your body. For example, a person who is self-critical concentrates his energies on seeing himself as a no gooder, inadequate and inept which subsequently stimulates a plethora of negative emotions (anxious, angry, depressed, ashamed, disgusted, worried, envious and scared). Day after day, this self-critical behavior stimulates this individual’s self-protection system and over time, he or she will feel depressed, worthless and inadequate.

Paul Gilbert’s writings identify two types of self-critical individuals after a mistake has been committed:

1. Those who respond with negative emotions of frustration and anger;
2. Those who respond with positive feelings of compassion where mistakes are recognized, appreciated and accompanied by a desire for improvement.

Choosing to see mistakes as learning opportunities will create a sense of inner peace. In our western society, error and punishment go hand in hand. Paul Gilbert’s writings offers us an opportunity to become aware of our potential to transform anxiety into compassion and self-love.

The next time you make a mistake, replace your self-loathing emotions with gentleness and celebrate the fact that you are human. Accept that you made a mistake, learn from experience and realize the benefits of your new way of reacting. Remember that if you keep hating yourself every time you make a mistake, just remember the negative effects it will have on your body making you more upset, depressed and anxious.

When I was a young adult, my father often quoted Dr. Wayne Dyer: *“Dominique, you are the sum total of your choices.”* Oh yes! Treat yourself to this gift for the New Year and start creating an extraordinary life.

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