OVERVIEW

- Contextual Background

- Course Objectives

- PTAS Course Design

- Learning Outcomes

- Findings
  - Strengths
  - Weaknesses

- Next Steps and Further Dissemination
  - Integrating Compassion & Empathy *into* Work & Life at the University of Edinburgh

CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND

- Empathy plays integral interpersonal and societal role in creating emotional bridges that promote pro-social behaviour (Reiss, 2017)

- 'Unbalanced' empathy can have detrimental consequences that act as a barrier to prosocial behaviour (Duarte et al., 2016; Singer & Klimecki, 2014)

- Compassion for the self and others can be a protective factor against empathy burnout

- Research indicates empathy and compassion are not only traits, but also skills, requiring training and development

- COVID-19 has accentuated the need for compassion (Lai, 2020)

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COURSE OBJECTIVES

To develop theoretical and experiential case study-based (Kolb, 2015) understanding of empathy, emotional labour and compassion: their benefits, obstacles, and appropriate use

To embed this understanding, through reflective practice, as it applies to the participant's own interests and context

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PTAS COURSE DESIGN

- Multi-disciplinary team created course content including pre-recorded videos, associated reading and reflective practice exercises.

- Delivered using Learn during semester one of academic year 2021/2022

- Five bi-weekly asynchronous sessions:
    1. Research on the science and philosophy of empathy and compassion
    2. Exploring significant differences between empathy and compassion
    3. Evidence-based case studies of resistance to and benefits of compassion in educational and care contexts
    4. Defining self-compassion and evidence-based strategies for self compassion
    5. Evidence-based studies of compassion in workplaces

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Define — compassion & empathy & their significant similarities & differences

Discuss — the role of emotions & emotional labour in work & relational dynamics

Locate — research on the science & philosophy of empathy & compassion

Identify — experiences where compassion is present & where it may be absent

Explain — how compassion can save time & protect against burnout

Recognise — resistance to & benefits of empathy & compassion in their own educational &/or care contexts

Develop — strategies to balance & enhance their own empathy & compassion strategies for self-compassion

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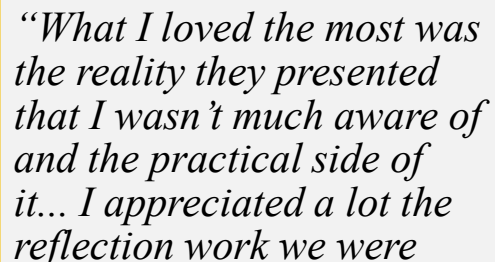
FINDINGS: PARTICIPANTS

- N = 19 participants
  - Participants included University staff **and** students from a variety of subject areas

- Participants completed a pre-course questionnaire to assess expectations and existing understanding

- Post-completion of the course participant feedback was requested in relation to 2 aspects:
  1. Course Benefits to Student Learning
  2. Course Structure
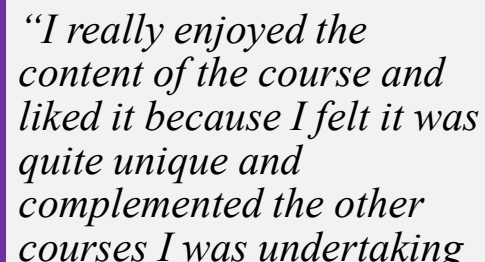   - Challenges to Engagement
     - Strengths
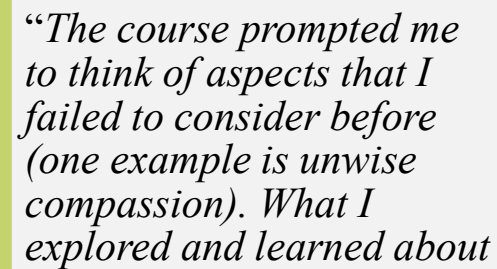
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FINDINGS: BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANT LEARNING

"What I loved the most was the reality they presented that I wasn't much aware of and the practical side of it... I appreciated a lot the reflection work we were invited to engage in and the self-care strategies that were provided for us (self-compassion is something I struggle with, and this course has helped me)"

"I really enjoyed the content of the course and liked it because I felt it was quite unique and complemented the other courses I was undertaking quite well. I thoroughly enjoyed this course and think it addresses compassion and empathy well whilst reminding others that they are important aspects of work/university/social life."

"The course prompted me to think of aspects that I failed to consider before (one example is unwise compassion). What I explored and learned about in this course was applicable and so useful in supporting my understanding of compassion and empathy in my life and at work... the difference between empathy and compassion and understanding the differences has helped and will continue to help me in my life and my work."

FINDINGS: COURSE STRUCTURE, WEAKNESSES

"I would suggest having synchronous online sessions that allow participants to connect with their peers and teachers and participate in the discussion board"

"Unfortunately, I could not take this course as I would have liked because I had a problem with the platform that made it challenging to participate."

"...I very much felt like I was doing this course on my own and was sort of left to my own devices, which I think is really great in some respects but maybe more contact and engagement with other course members could be beneficial."

"...I wish I had the time to engage with this...it became a 'thing' in the back of my head that I 'needed' to do, and I psychologically became resistant to it because instead of viewing it personal development, I was viewing it as another work thing...gradually it became too much."

FINDINGS: COURSE STRUCTURE, STRENGTHS

"Structurally, I thought the course was really great and appreciated the bi-weekly content – I found this easy to fit in with my schedule and dedicate time to"

"I loved the content and saved as much as I could as I want to review materials and readings at a later time... pleased to see the university had offered something like that amid everything [the pandemic]"

"I especially enjoyed the week where we discussed how to apply compassion and empathy to a working environment as I think it's important to learn and recognise how we can introduce them within different settings"

"The content was of a high quality (from videos, and materials to all the suggested readings), and very informative, stimulating, interesting and inspirational. I appreciated a lot the variety and the richness of the materials..."

FINDINGS: TEAM REFLECTIVE PERSPECTIVE

Enhancing consistency of accessibility

Offering full transcripts for each session

The appropriate/accessible learning platform

Managing participants' expectations regarding online learning

NEXT STEPS AND FURTHER DISSEMINATION

- Findings circulated within HiSS (Nursing Studies, CPASS)

- Findings will be submitted to the *Journal of Perspectives in Applied Academic Practice*

- Prof Pam Smith and Dr Lissette Aviles will submit a related paper to: *Nursing Inquiry*

- Findings shared as presentations at *Compassion Salon* (Dr Marti Balaam) & *Abundant Academy* (Dr Harriet Harris)

- Materials produced for this course are transferable for repeat use in other University projects
  - University Mindfulness Programme
  - Institute of Academic Development (IAD)
  - Support for tutor and professor teaching/practice

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THANK YOU

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QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS