

Compassion: Conceptualisations, Research and Use in Psychotherapy.

Paul Gilbert. New York: Routledge ([www.routledge.com/mentalhealth.co.uk](http://www.routledge.com/mentalhealth)). 2005, 408 pp., \$34.95 (paperback).

Paul Gilbert's edited volume, *Compassion: Conceptualisations, Research and Use in Psychotherapy* is a significant and timely addition to the canon of cognitive-behavioral practice literature. Gilbert and his co-authors take a comprehensive view of compassion, considering many different aspects of this fundamental human state of mind, and its' potential utility in psychotherapy. International contributors consider "integrative, social-constructivist, cognitive and Buddhist approaches to compassion." Each contributor brings a keen analytic intelligence to the relevant questions involved, and clearly delineates the various aspects of their position. Any therapist interested in exploring the frontiers of the cognitive-behavioral tradition would be well advised to place this text quite high on their reading list.

Over the past few years, concepts and terminology imported from Buddhism and other spiritual traditions have gained currency and popularity within the larger community of cognitive and behavioral therapists. The pace at which "mindfulness" and other practices have been adopted is considerable. Going far beyond basic mindfulness meditation references, the co-authors of "Compassion" discuss ways in which a therapist may bring a compassionate state of mind to bear upon the therapeutic relationship in a deliberate and systematic fashion. They also consider ways in which patients may develop their own "inner warmth and compassion" in order to better deal with psychological problems. According to an ancient Mahayana Buddhist aphorism, if a person possesses compassion, but no other positive qualities, they may become free from the grip of suffering. On the other hand, the aphorism states that if a person possesses every imaginable positive quality, but lacks compassion, they will remain in a state of suffering. What Gilbert and his colleagues appear to have aimed for is the provision of a comprehensive and facilitative guide for those who wish to test the strength of this timeless perspective.

Although each of the chapters has much to offer, some of the contributors bring particularly significant points to light. Sheila Wang's chapter establishes conceptual relationships between physiological research and Buddhist teachings concerning compassion. Her work here is sufficiently comprehensive and thoughtful to provoke a re-examination of one's understanding of the relationship between empathy and anxiety. Gilbert's chapter on "compassionate mind training" provides the clinician with a workable starting point to integrate the intentional use of compassion with evidence-based therapy technique. Additionally, Robert Leahy's chapter concerning a social-cognitive model of validation helps shine the light of reason on those aspects of the psychotherapeutic paradigm once left awash in the Mysterian posturing of outmoded psychoanalytic approaches.

In 2006 Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy seems to yet again stand at a crossroads. The "third wave" behavior therapies sometimes suggest that their emphasis on mindfulness and acceptance places them in a categorically superior position to "Second Wave" cognitive approaches. Gilbert's text demonstrates the power and possibility of cognitive therapy as it address and integrates innovations and frontiers both recent and ancient. Any therapist who is considering exploring this "third wave" through a multi-hundred dollar workshop or meditation retreat would be better advised to order [Compassion: Conceptualisations, Research and Use in Psychotherapy](#) and integrate the techniques into their current cognitive therapy practice. There is enough material here to explore and test for many months and, perhaps, years to come.

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