

APPENDIX B: COMPASSIONATE MINDFULNESS - CARERS

- Sit for a minute or two with your eyes closed. Allow your mind to settle a bit. Focus on the breath, letting your thoughts about tasks and the future and the past to fall away from your mind for a little while.
- Bring your attention to what you do for a living. Bring into awareness all of the people you see who suffer, who are in some sort of distress, the work you do to help them. Reflect on your intentions for these people; that they suffer less, that they find some answers to the problems in their lives, that they experience less distress and sometimes also experience happiness or contentment, that they have a sense of peace in their lives.
- Allow your compassion to grow and expand—hold in your mind these human beings caught in painful circumstances, in one way or another doing the best they can with the resources they have. Send caring and compassionate feelings towards them. And also to yourself, as someone not that different from them, although perhaps more fortunate at this moment in time.
- Bring one of these people, one of your clients, into mind—someone whose difficulties are especially difficult to you right now. Let yourself imagine what he or she feels, see what he or she sees. Try not to get lost in this person's suffering—it is, after all, their suffering, not yours; watch it from the grounded, caring place that you have established. Allow yourself to imagine their pain, but not get caught in it.
- Reflect on what you know of this person's experience. Note that it is not a bad thing to hurt when you have been hurt. This person's distress is part of their lived experience, part of being alive. It is ultimately transient; it will, inevitably, change and shift. Acknowledge the honour that you are allowed to be present with this person at this moment in time, this point in theirs and your lives, in all the complexity of pain and caring.
- Allow a gentle curiosity about your present experience of doing this exercise to grow. Notice, accept, and even embrace any feelings and thoughts that may be arising in you as you do this reflection—thoughts about how privileged you are, to be where you are, doing what you are doing. Your work and your relationship to the people you support is a special gift, although it may not always seem that way. See if you can directly experience the honour of being able to intervene in the suffering and distress of others. It could have gone differently, you might have ended up doing something less meaningful or beneficial. Remember, if this is true for you, how you have always wanted to be able to make some difference in the lives of other people and how lucky you are that you can.
- Allow yourself now to gently bring your attention and awareness back to your breath— noticing the inward and outward breaths you take at this particular present moment.