

Guidance for 20-minute Team Space

The purpose of this practice is to provide a space for teams to connect, reflect and learn.

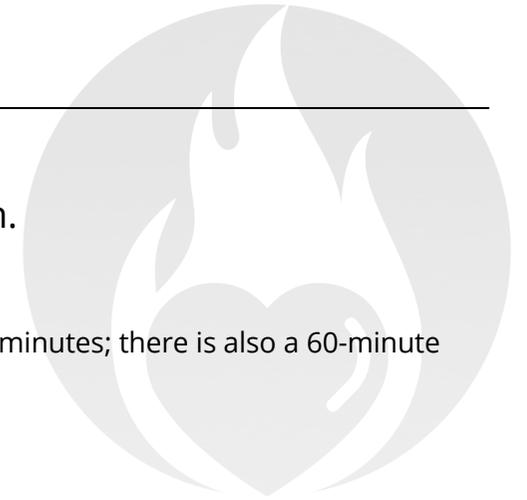
Thank you for downloading this guidance note and script on how to run this Compassion Practice. This one takes 20 minutes; there is also a 60-minute practice for Teams.

It is one of a family of Compassion Practices that have been designed for different situations:

- Individuals, pairs and small groups
- Larger groups of people from across an organisation who don't necessarily know each other
- Teams - groups of people who regularly work together.

These can all be found at [CompassionPractices.net](https://www.compassionpractices.net), along with support on how to use them and inspirations from others who already have.

Do take a moment to browse the collection and consider which ones might be most helpful for you, at this time.



Creating Oneness and Compassion in Teams

What is the culture of your team like? Are your meetings effective? Do a few voices dominate whilst others sit back and not contribute? Or maybe your meetings fail to lead to action and change? Do you have good relationships characterised by honesty, integrity, encouragement, recognition, appreciation and kindness? Do these qualities provide the foundation for an open discussion of shared challenges or do people just feel under pressure from complexity, challenge, critique and pressure without having a safe foundation to rely on?

All organisations and teams are under pressure to change, particularly since the pandemic, yet few have made the time to create the team culture that can support each team member as they go through change. These Team Space practices give you the time to: think about your shared challenges; build relationships on which team culture rests; and learn a subtle yet powerful set of behaviours that will provide a strong foundation for everything you do together.

Some people may dismiss kindness, encouragement, recognition, appreciation and compassion as 'soft and fluffy', yet combined with rigour, high standards, integrity, honesty and plain speaking they can help you to create a culture in which everyone is more able to play their part in facing up to the inevitable complexity, challenge, critique and pressure of modern life in a team. See the One Leadership thought piece on "Creating Team Oneness in Times of Crisis" for more background.

To really think well together, the more your team trust each other, the better; you need to be able to be honest and vulnerable with each other, for example, by sharing ideas that may not be fully formed, and discussing opposing ideas without anyone taking it personally. The approach we outline here will, if used consistently over time, increase safety in the group, build essential skills and strengthen relationships as well as result in better thinking.

A reliable method

We have spent years honing these simple yet effective methods for helping teams to think well together. In doing so, we have drawn on Nancy Kline's *Thinking Environment* approach, simplifying it so that you don't always need a facilitator or have to know much about the theory behind it. Nancy's method has been used globally; it has a strong track record.

Pairing up as facilitators

Our advice is that whilst it is possible for one person to facilitate a Team Space, it is better to work in a pair if possible, especially if the team is facing challenges. When facilitating a team meeting, your attention needs to move between holding the process and being involved in the content. When we are doing this, we always decide who is 'Lead goose' and who is 'Wing goose' (geese fly in an aerodynamic V formation and take it in turns to be in the more tiring lead position). To mix our metaphors, the lead goose or Facilitator is 'on the dancefloor' focussing on the task elements of the

meeting, whilst the wing goose or Host is 'on the balcony', supporting the Lead by keeping time (make sure you have a timer, maybe on your phone, with an audible bell that all will be able to hear), ensuring that the process is on track and watching for the functioning of the team and the engagement and wellbeing of each individual. The Wing also helps the Lead to think through any challenges that may arise.

To begin with, you will therefore need to identify in advance who the facilitation pair will be and discuss and agree your roles, and what you might need to do to prepare as well as how you will work together on the day. As people become more familiar with having a pair of facilitators, you may well find you can invite the support of a team member on the day or in the moment.

People using Compassion Practices may also find it helpful to belong to a community of practice such as [CompassionPractices.net](https://www.compassionpractices.net).

Script

These practices have been designed for everyone to benefit from. We have prepared the following script, which walks you through the whole meeting, giving you exact wordings and instructions for what to say and do, when, in the process. We strongly suggest that you read through beforehand, and use the Script until you are really familiar with the method, having used it a few times. This will help you to 'relax into structure', enjoy the process more, and avoid easy errors. One uses the script as it is written, so no need to worry about what to say. Quotation marks "... " are used to show when you can simply follow the script, word for word.

Notes in square brackets [such as these] are instructions for you.

Bring your authentic self to your facilitation – feel free to add bits of gentle humour or humanity, always mindful of the aim to create a safe, compassionate atmosphere.

Following up

Where relevant and accessible, it is good to be able to have resources available that can help people to find support such as staff wellbeing services or employee assistance programmes.

Setting up

This practice needs 20 minutes with a group of up to ten colleagues; 6-8 is ideal; more will take usually longer.

Arrange chairs in a circle with no table in between where possible, giving people enough space, mindful of current precautions. Ask people to arrive in time for a prompt start. If you're expecting latecomers, ensure it's possible for people to arrive late and still feel welcome. If you need to move a table, perhaps involve those taking part as a fun way to start things off, and as a subtle way to signal that they are about to participate in a different type of meeting.

Ask people to put laptops and phones away. These instructions signal the significance you are placing on the discussion and your expectation of their full attention and involvement. If virtual, make a similar request for people's full attention.

● Introduction

Welcome [2 min]

Host: “This is an opportunity to think about our Team during what is a challenging time for all of us. It should take about 20 minutes”.

“Why could this focus on us as a team be useful? All of you will have been in some good teams and some poor teams. The difference is immense – teams that are cohesive, creative and supportive are resilient and consistently achieve incredible outcomes. Now more than ever we need to be able to do this – for our patients, for our systems, for our families, for each other and for our own wellbeing.”

“I’m [NAME] and I’ll be hosting the space; my job is to keep us to time and ensure everyone is comfortable.”

“I’m [NAME], I’ll be facilitating, and taking everyone through this process. With these practices, experience over many years has shown that the structure creates safety for those taking part, which in turn unlocks a productive conversation, so I am going to guide us through in quite a structured way. This may feel new or unfamiliar but we know it works, so please just go with it if you can. [Smile and be light about this!]”

Initial grounding exercise: “So, welcome. Let’s fully arrive. Feeling your feet on the ground, noticing that you are here, maybe appreciating yourself for making that happen, noticing that you are amongst colleagues, taking time for a couple of deep breaths and maybe letting go of whatever you have just been doing [*leave pause to breathe*].”

“This approach uses a mix of pairs work and work in a circle.”

“We’ll be asking a series of questions and inviting you to share your thoughts and to listen to each other as attentively as possible. It’s always okay to pass – no one has to say anything if they don’t want to, and only share what you feel comfortable to share. Please can we agree that this is a confidential space – people get more from these meetings when they feel sure that none of their contributions will be recorded or shared with anyone outside this space. Can I just check that you all agree that what happens here stays here? Please raise your hand.”

“At the end of our time together, if anything has come up and you want to talk to one of us, we’ll be available”.

● Round 1

“One thing going well outside work” (As a round) [3 min]

Facilitator: “In this round we’re inviting you to share in about half a minute one thing that is going well for you outside work at the moment. Try to be specific. If you can start by saying your first name that would be helpful.”

“When someone is ready to begin, please do, then we’ll go around to the left. Clearly, it’s a challenging time, so it might be hard to find something positive. It doesn’t matter how small the positive is – it’s also ok to pass. If you wish to pass, I’ll come back to you at the end to check if there is anything you would like to contribute.”

[At the end of the round]: “Thank you, it’s a great practice to tune into things that are going well and that we feel gratitude for, no matter how small. It is also a way to tune into each other as humans, getting a sense of each person.”

● Round 2

“NAME + What is going well in the team?” [1 min intro + 4 min]

“Thank you. We would now like you to work **in pairs** with someone you don’t normally work closely with. The aim is to give each of you space to think out loud and to be heard.”

“We invite you to think about what is going well in the team. This might be to do with your relationships, the atmosphere, your systems or anything else. You can share as little or as much as you want to.”

“Each of you will have a turn to be the thinker and to be the listener.”

[Host, get ready to time 2 minutes each, precisely]

“Thinkers – you have 2 minutes to consider what is currently going well in the team. If you run out of things to say - and you might be surprised at how long 2 minutes feels - don’t feel you have to keep talking. Just take the time to keep thinking, knowing you won’t be interrupted by your listener.”

“Listeners, it is your role to ask: **“[NAME] What is going well in the team?”** and then listen without interrupting and with undivided attention and appreciation. Resist the urge to chip in with your own experiences as you might in a normal conversation – your role is simply to create the space for your partner to think. If your partner seems to run out of things to say, give them space and then simply prompt them with – **‘and what else?’** ”

● Round 3

Appreciation: “[NAME] What I appreciate about what you said is...”

[2 x 30 sec]

“Next we’d like you to take a moment to appreciate something about what partner said.”

“We don’t often take the time to appreciate others but as the saying goes, ‘thinking something good about someone and not saying it, is like wrapping a present but not giving it!’ Also, we’re not always great at receiving appreciation; try to really take in the appreciation.”

So continuing in pairs... take *30 seconds* each to say to one another:

“Say your partner’s name + What I appreciate about what you said is...”

● Round 4

“How can we help build oneness in the team?” [4 min]

“Staying in your pairs...this bit is about oneness in the team. Team oneness helps people feel safe and appreciated and creates a culture where we can all give of our best, learn, support and encourage each other, suggest improvements to our systems and also make the odd mistake. So the instruction is...”

Say your partner’s name and ask “How can we help build oneness in the team?”

[2 minutes each]

Follow same instructions as Round 2 for Thinker and Listener. “Listeners, listen for things you appreciate about your partner”.

● Round 5

Appreciation: “[NAME] One thing I appreciate about you is...” [2 x 30 sec]

“We’d like you to take another moment to appreciate your partner.”

“This time please focus on one thing you appreciate about your partner – an aspect of their behaviour or character that you may have noticed while they were speaking, during your shift or from what you already know about them.”

The author Nancy Kline says that there are 3 S’s of good appreciation: Be Sincere, Specific and Succinct – so tune into those three S’s before giving your appreciation.

So continuing in pairs... take *30 seconds* each to say to one another:

“Your partner’s name + One thing I appreciate about you is...”

● Round 6

“One thing I will do to help build oneness in the team?” (As a round) [3 min]

“We’ll now come back into the larger group; this is an invitation to share briefly your latest thinking on:

“One thing I will do to help build oneness in the team...” “Take a moment to reflect on this [30 second pause] and then when someone is ready, please start, then we’ll go around to the left. You are free to pass. If you wish to pass, I’ll come back to you at the end to check if there is anything you would like to contribute.”

● Round 7

Grounding exercise to end [1 min]

Host: “Thank you for taking time to be here. To close, let’s take an opportunity for a moment’s pause – a bit of breathing space in all the busyness. To start with, taking a moment to close your eyes or lower your gaze [PAUSE]. Becoming aware of the ground under your feet [PAUSE]. Taking a breath, noticing that you have a moment to slow down, maybe bringing to mind something simple that you appreciate but otherwise might take for granted. [PAUSE] You are amongst others sharing similar challenges and it’s helpful to connect and reflect [PAUSE].

And when you are ready, bringing your attention back to the room.

Thank you. That’s the end of the 20-minute Team Space.”

● END

20-minute Team Space - Things to consider

Who can run these sessions?

It is best if at least one of the people holding the space has some experience as a coach, facilitator or psychologist. You may well have people with these skills in your team – sometimes hidden!

Our experience is that committing to the designed structure of each practice is a key part of the space feeling safe and enabling. It helps to involve everyone and avoids a few voices dominating. It also helps the facilitator to feel that they don't need to do a large amount of preparation.

What happens if someone's late?

Compassion Practices have been time-focused in their design, and sticking to structure is key, so our experience has been that it's important to start on time. It's also important to recognise that people might not be able to be exactly on time for all kinds of reasons, so a generous spirit and some facilitation skill is important both to start on time, and leave space for people to arrive late and feel welcome. If running a larger group or team Compassion Practice, the host is advised to form part of the pairs if there is an odd number but if someone arrives late, they can take the host's place in that pair at the start of the next round, when they've had the instructions. If using larger Compassion Practices virtually, the host may also acknowledge and welcome latecomers in the 'chat room' of the chosen platform.

What happens if someone cries?

It is important that people using Compassion Practices can bring their whole selves to the compassion experience; feelings are inevitable so make them welcome. People may cry because they feel upset, or simply as a release for long-held emotions. People may also laugh and feel joyous. Facilitators, and those who take part, should be prepared to witness these feelings in themselves and others. The facilitator's role is to create safety to hold a wide range of emotions, and to bring is a willingness to support any emotional needs that arise; be human but adult; avoid 'rescuing'. Be ready to meaningfully signpost supportive services if necessary.

What if someone dominates the space?

This should not happen if you commit to the structure; this is key to signalling that everyone has equal opportunity to participate, and ensures that nobody can

dominate. If people jump in out of turn, they should be kindly told that the structure is different to normal discussion and that everyone has their turn. This itself can have a profound effect on the culture of teams. This is fondly known as 'fierce facilitation' and the recommended timer/stopwatch really helps with this. Our experience is that this fierce time management method quickly sets the tone for listening and respect for equal 'airtime'.

Who looks after the facilitators?

The facilitator and host should make time to debrief afterwards, even if only quickly. We will be offering online spaces for facilitators to share their experiences, reflect and learn from others – see CompassionPractices.net.

Can I just get on with it?

Yes. Our experience suggests that confidence grows by using the practices. However, if completely new to Compassion Practices we ideally recommend taking part in one first. You can do this by contacting www.CompassionPractices.net to see if any Compassion Practices are available, and you may also wish to try #5minMeSpace by yourself, or with another person of your choosing, to experience a sense of the work.

However, you may encounter some resistance so it will be vital to have the support of key people in your team, especially if some in your team are reacting badly to stresses. We are also available to facilitate a Team Space - we have a wide and growing network of skilled and experienced professionals.

It can also be helpful to start using Compassion Practices with close colleagues to build your own confidence, before expanding your practice. Once confident, and ready to promote the practices, or connect with others you can use word of mouth to build momentum; this has worked well elsewhere. Remember, CompassionPractices.net has been established to help new people find the practices, gain confidence, connect with others and get started. Experience tells us that taking time to do this benefits both facilitators and those taking part.

Does it matter if the team keeps changing?

We know that your teams will be forming, dissolving and re-forming constantly. The method here helps people to reflect both on their immediate experience with this team and more generally on how teams work well and how they can play their part

in this. It also helps people to form deep bonds quickly – you may be surprised by the intensity of some of the conversations and connections. This helps when you work together in future. For more stable teams, One Leadership (see EnablingCatalysts.com) offers a programme that covers different aspects of Team Oneness over time.

Inclusion

Compassion Practices have been designed for everyone to benefit from. They offer a human experience, for all. When planning to run them, please think about who might not normally be invited into support spaces and ensure that no one is left out, using any invitational wording/marketing to make this clear. Take time to learn about cultural differences, and cultural appropriateness. Think too about accessibility and learn about social disability. Compassion Practices can be wonderfully inclusive places to share space and learn about other experiences, and they shouldn't ever create further division between people. If you formally evaluate people's experience of taking part, do remember to consider checking on these considerations.

Where do these ideas come from?

Andy Bradley (recognised in 2012 by Nesta as one of Britain's new radical thinkers) has been sharing his work on Compassion Circles for over 10 years. Compassion Circles have been adapted for use in many different contexts. In Aneurin Bevan University Health Board over 1000 healthcare staff have participated in rounds over the last 5 years. Evaluation indicates that the experience is highly valued. Compassion Circles have also become an integral part of the Compassionate Mental Health gatherings offered as a space for transformation and dialogue in Wales.

Our team have been doing this work for over 10 years in a range of organisations and groups. People hugely value an opportunity to step back from day-to-day tasks and spend some time on team and individual, which are often neglected.

Our experience as clinicians, team coaches and consultants is that Compassion Practices are helpful to those who use them. They have evaluated very well. We encourage you to try it and see for yourself. Professor Michael West, senior leadership advisor to the NHS, describes these practices as both 'delicate and powerful'.

20-minute Team Space is one of a family of Compassion Practices, which have been developed by Andy Bradley, Paul Johanson, Alister Scott, & Laura Simms for NHS England and NHS Improvement in 2020. Dr Alister Scott at The One Leadership Project is primary author of this TeamSpace protocol.

For more information please go to CompassionPractices.net, where you can find support and resources. There, you can register to receive updates.

If you have found this useful please spread the word by letting people know by pointing them to CompassionPractices.net.

We'd also greatly appreciate hearing your stories and feedback, possibly to share as inspirations for others. Thank you – please be in touch via the website.

*Developed by Andy Bradley, Paul Johanson, Alister Scott, & Laura Simms for NHS England and NHS Improvement in 2020. The original web-based version of #5minMeSpace is held on the NHS site <https://people.nhs.uk/guides/10-minute-pause-spaces/>