

Guidance for 60-minute Team Space

The purpose of this practice is to provide a space for teams to connect, reflect and learn through a facilitated process that provides structure.

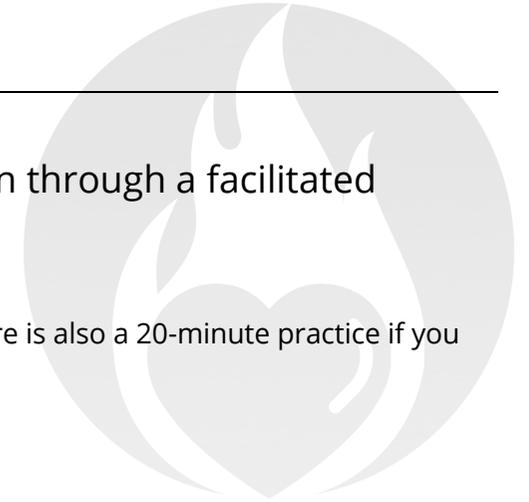
Thank you for downloading this guidance note on how to run this Compassion Practice. This one takes an hour; there is also a 20-minute practice if you have less time.

These practices are part 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 have already.

We hope to see you there!



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.

Script

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.

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 60 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 the participants 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 [about 5 minutes]

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

“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 participants 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. When things are stressful, it is easy to still be in the last meeting or the last thing you were doing, or worrying about something coming up. So learning from mindfulness practices, let’s do a grounding so that we can all fully arrive here now. 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 noticing any worries, seeing if you can let go of them for now [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, without interrupting. 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) [about 5 mins]

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. Research tells us that people think better when they are in a positive or appreciative state of mind. They also tend to be better to be around!”

“Clearly, it’s a challenging time, so it might be hard to find something positive. It doesn’t matter how small the positive is. Maybe it is something you normally take for granted but is actually something that you feel grateful for. It often helps by trying to be specific.”

“It is ok to pass. If you wish to, I’ll come back to you at the end to check if there is anything you would like to contribute. When someone is ready to begin, please do, then we’ll go around to the left.

[If you sense that not everyone knows each other, say: “If you can start by saying your first name that would be helpful”.]

[At the end of the round, remembering to offer anyone who passed another chance to contribute, then]: “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. It’s amazing what comes up, things we never knew about each other...”

● Round 2: What is going well in the team? [2-minute intro + 15 minutes]

“Thank you. We’re now going to think about what is going well in the team. Too often the normal approach is to focus on things that aren’t going well and need to be improved, but this misses the many things that are probably going well, which is a more encouraging foundation to work from.”

“We’re going to do this in several phases: first, you’ll have a chance to think about the question on your own, so you’ll know you have something to say. Part of this method involves a commitment to humanity first – never putting people on the spot. Next, once everyone has had a chance to think on their own, we’ll do a first round where everyone will have a chance to share a first thought. This will help us to see how other people think, and will inevitably broaden our thinking. The third phase is to work in pairs, with each person having a chance to think and a chance to listen without interrupting. Finally, we will come back in the group and share our latest thinking.

“Please now pair up with someone you don’t normally spend a lot of time with, make sure you know each other’s name, decide who is going to think and listen first, and then start when you are ready”.

[Host can put the instructions up on a flip chart or equivalent if you want].

[Host to time 2 minutes each and signal when it is time to swap over, with the thinker becoming the listener and vice versa; maybe remind them of the instructions, especially for the listener, which is generally the more challenging role in the pairs].

[When both partners have had their turn:]

2.4: “Thank you. How was that? Did you manage to listen without interrupting? That can be quite difficult! What was it like being listened to, knowing you weren’t going to be interrupted? [Allow a few people to speak up about these questions].

“So now we are going to swap some appreciations. 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!’

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

“We asked you to listen out for things that you appreciate about what your partner what was saying, so now is your chance to share that with them by saying their name and saying “What I appreciate about what you said is...”

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:

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

[Host to time 2 x 30 seconds, maybe signalling halfway through that it’s time to swap over]

2.5: “Finally in this round, given that your thinking has had time to evolve, we are going to share our latest thinking, in no more than half a minute each, still on the same question about ‘What is going well in the team’. Remember that this method relies on each person having roughly the same airtime, so please speak succinctly and then give space for others”.

[Thank each person evenly in turn, making sure no one speaks for much more than half a minute and gently reining them in if they do].

● **Round 3: How can we help build oneness in the team?** [10 minutes]

“Great, now we’re going to think together about how we can help build 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.”

[This focus on oneness may be quite new or challenging for some people, so you may face some questions about what we mean by oneness. Try to avoid getting into a big debate about this, instead gently pushing it back to people and suggesting that they think about this in the thinking time that they are going to get in this round.]

3.1: First, let’s take 2 minutes to think about the question on your own.

[Host to time 2 minutes].

3.2: “We are going to ask you to make a pair with someone else – again, we suggest someone you don’t normally spend a lot of time with, to give you a chance to mix across the team and get to know each a bit better. Please could you find a new partner now?”

[When they are ready]:

So the instruction for this pairs thinking is...“Say your partner’s name and ask “How can we help build oneness in the team?”

[Host to time 2 minutes each and signal when it is time to swap over]

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

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

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

“This time please focus on one thing you appreciate about your partner as a person – 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. Again remember to the 3 S’s and try to be Sincere, Specific and Succinct; take a little moment to collect your thoughts before beginning.”

“Many people struggle to receive appreciation or are not used to it, and like the 3 S’s there are 3 A’s for receiving appreciation: first of all, Acknowledge that what the other person is saying is true for them. Next, Allow it in and finally, Accept it – these

latter two can take a while. If you like, to help your partner remember your appreciation, write them down now or send them to them on a nice card later. [You may be amazed how people can get carried away at this point. IF this creates a buzz, which it often does, let this exercise take longer – often there is a lot of stored up appreciation that people simply have never had an excuse to share. If this happens, do feel free to comment on the buzz in the room, make a joke about how long it took to get their attention at the end, whatever feels natural, positive and fun. It is this buzz that comes from a combination of the thinking time, the quality of the listening and the appreciations that they will remember and that will bring them back for more in future.]

● **Round 4: How I will help build oneness in the team (As a round)** [5 minutes]

“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”

“First, take one minute to reflect on this [Time one minute]

“OK 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.”

[Ensure no one dominates or speaks for too long, then check at the end if anyone who skipped their turn would like to contribute now].

● **Round 5: Final thought, appreciation for the meeting + your partner**

[This round should take about 10 minutes]

“Ok so this is our final round. The request is to share three things: a final thought, an appreciation for the meeting, and an appreciation for your most recent thinking partner.

Take a couple of minutes to collect your thoughts in silence on your own; in this way, you will be able to really listen, not worrying about what you are going to say. We are going to ask you to keep your contribution to one minute.”

[Time 2 minutes]

“Everyone ready? [Genuinely check that they are – give people more time if their heads are still down, making notes]. “If someone would like to start, then this time, just go when you are ready, perhaps if you have something to say that links to what someone has just said. So it’s a final thought, an appreciation for the meeting and an appreciation for your recent thinking partner; you have about one minute each, so everyone gets time to take a turn.”

Grounding exercise to end [about 2 minutes]

Host: “Thank you, we are now coming close to the end. Thanks 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.

“Please remember our commitment to confidentiality at the outset. Integrity, trust and safety are key foundations for creating oneness in teams.

“Thank you. That’s the end of the 60-minute Team Space.”

● **END**

60-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 structure 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?

These are intentionally short meetings, and sticking to structure is key, so it's important to start on time. It's also true that some might not be able to be exactly on time for all kinds of reasons, so a generous spirit and some facilitation skill is needed both to start on time and welcome people if they arrive late. If there is an odd number, the host should form part of a pair but if someone arrives late, they can take the host's place in that pair in the next round.

What happens if someone gets upset?

It is important that people in the Team Space can bring their whole selves; feelings are inevitable so make them welcome. The facilitator's role is to create safety; 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.

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. 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.

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.

Where do these ideas come from?

Our team have been doing this work for many years across different sectors. Evaluations consistently show that 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.

60-minute Team Space is one of a family of Compassion Practices, which have been developed by Andy Bradley and colleagues including Dr Alister Scott at The One Leadership Project, 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.