WORKSHOP: An Introduction to Compassion Focused Therapy and Social Mentality Theory with Prof Paul Gilbert & Dr Chris Irons

In this workshop we will be exploring some of the deeper evolutionary based aspects of safety particularly in relation to interpersonal relationships. Social mentality theory argues that different types of social motivation (such as for competing with others, being assertive, forming friendships, developing intense attachments, and sexuality) utilise different processing systems. In order for people to enact these styles of relationships and successfully create appropriate role relationships, people need to be able to decode social signals and also send social signals. Social mentalities create interpersonal dances of sending and receiving social signals. We will explore two of the most salient social mentalities and therapy which is the competitive system and the caring system.

There is considerable evidence that Western society has grossly over activated competitive motives leading people to be overly focused on social comparison self-critical competing to try and avoid being inferior and often left feeling easily excluded. The caring motivational system however has a completely different orientation with a different physiological pattern.

We will explore how compassion is linked to the dynamics of attachment such as creating an internal secure base and safe haven, and consider how an important
part of CFT is being able to shift people from a competitive to a caring motivational system for relating to self and others.

This workshop will incorporate guided discovery practice through group work and personal practice. This workshop is ideally for practitioners who have some experience with CFT.

Key learning points

- Identifying and exploring different social mentalities
- Working with how social mentalities present in therapy, and in the therapeutic relationship
- Considering all possible clinical interventions and the relevance of understanding social mentalities for CFT

Useful Reading


**Symposium speakers**

Prof Paul Gilbert is FBPsS, PhD, OBE is a Professor of Clinical Psychology and the founder of Compassion Focused Therapy. He developed Social Mentality Theory in the late 1980s, and has researched evolutionary approaches to psychopathology for over 35 years with a special focus on shame and the treatment of shame based difficulties, for which compassion focused therapy (CFT) was developed. He has written and edited 22 books, including the bestselling *Overcoming Depression* and *The Compassionate Mind*, and established the Compassionate Mind Foundation in 2006. He was awarded an OBE in March 2011.
Dr Chris Irons is a Clinical Psychologist, and one of the founders and directors of Balanced Minds. Along with colleague Dr Charlie Heriot-Maitland, he has developed an eight week Compassionate Mind Training programme for the general public. Chris has published in many areas of psychology and Compassion Focused Therapy, and is a co-author of The Compassionate Mind Workbook and Experiencing Compassion Focused Therapy from the Inside Out. Chris is one of the Compassionate Mind Foundation's international trainers and training advisers, with many years of clinical experience using CFT. He is currently researching the role of compassion and rumination in depression; the role of compassion and shame in psychosis; and the role of compassion in relationship quality. His latest book is The Compassionate Mind Approach to Difficult Emotions.