

## Compassionate Social Fitness: Implications for an Extreme Type of Male Shyness and Withdrawal

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## Shyness is Universal



Sometimes shyness becomes more extreme and problematic due to circumstances and life events.

In this talk I will lead you through my experience of working with shyness when it is problematic and translating some of the results of personality theory and social psychology into methods that help people meet their social goals.

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## Overview

Shyness is Universal

Coming to Understand:

Pathologizing shyness: CBT (Heimberg, et. al, 1990)

Depathologizing shyness: Social Fitness

Challenging Blame and Shame

Adding Compassion

Addressing Fears of Compassion

Online Gaming and Pornography-Induced  
Male Shyness

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## Shame and Anger: Killer Emotions

Shame and anger are the killer emotions in shyness

When we are fearful, others look dangerous,

When we feel ashamed, others appear contemptuous,

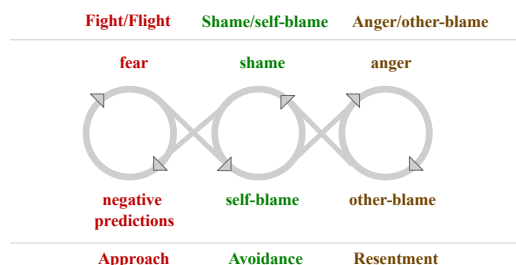
When we feel vulnerable, others appear powerful  
and potentially threatening.

Negative automatic thoughts can be about others, as well as self, and related to anger as well as fear and shame.

Negative emotion and negative thoughts affect each other in an escalating reciprocal pattern.

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## Three Vicious Cycles



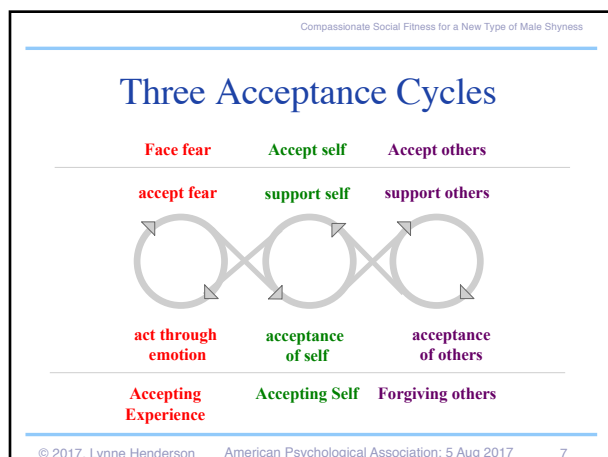
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## What is Social Fitness?

*Social Fitness, like physical fitness, is a state of physiological, behavioral, emotional, and mental conditioning that implies adaptive functioning and a sense of well being.*



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## Social Fitness Training

Twenty-six Weekly Two-hour Cognitive-Behavioral Group sessions

**Daily Workouts**  
Self-Monitoring, Self-reinforcement

**Exposures** with Cognitive Restructuring (Heimberg, et.al, 1990); currently behavioral experiments, expectancy violations, (Craske et al., 2014)  
Changing negative attributions and beliefs about the self and others (Henderson, 2002; Seligman et al., 1984)

**Social Skills Training** - the second 13 weeks: Reaching out (Johnson, 2014)  
Communication Training - Where do I go from here?  
Building intimacy - self-disclosure, self assertion, handling criticism, conflict  
Expression of Feelings  
Empathy - listening

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## Significant Reductions

IIP-Avoidant	STAXI Anger In
IIP-Hostile	STAXI Trait Anger
IIP-Non-assertive	Trait Shame, Guilt
IIP-Submissive dependent	Self-blame
Brief Fear of Negative Evaluation	Depression
Social Anxiety	

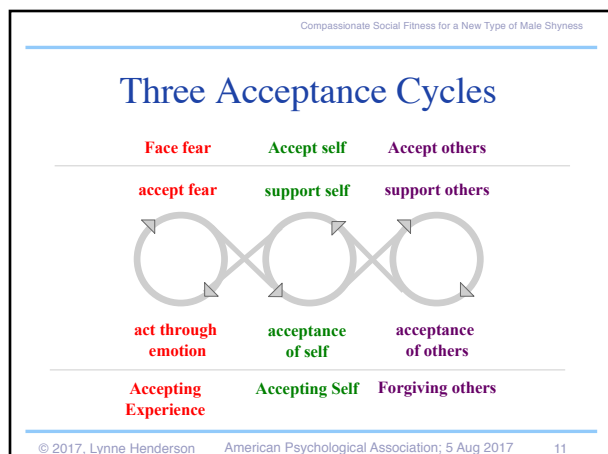
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## The “Henderson/Zimbardo” Shyness Questionnaire

- I blame myself when things do not go the way I want them to.
- I sometimes feel ashamed after social situations.
- I am usually aware of my feelings, even if I do not know what prompted them.
- If someone rejects me I assume that I have done something wrong.
- I tend to be more critical of other people than I appear to be.

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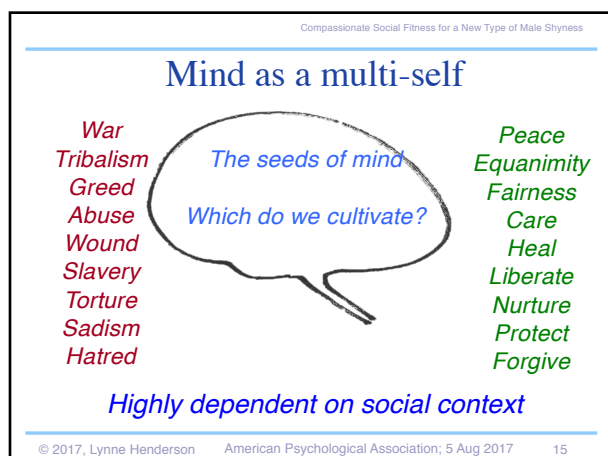
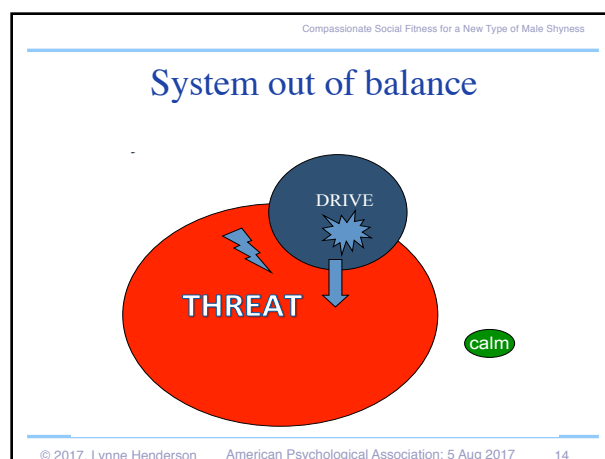
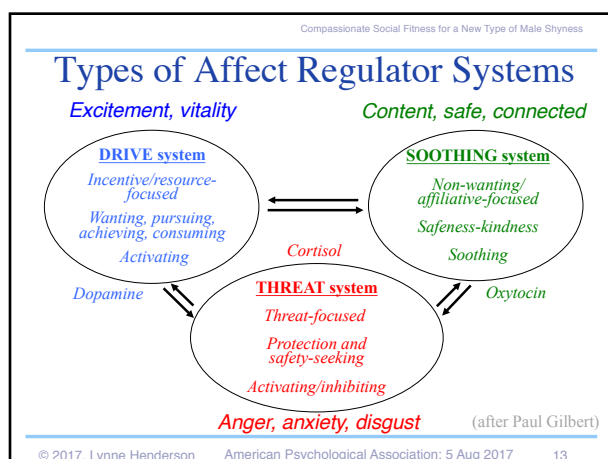
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## Compassionate Social Fitness

Paul Gilbert’s Compassion-Focused Therapy (CFT)

*Gilbert, P. (2009). Introducing compassion-focused therapy. Advances in psychiatric treatment, 15, 199-208. doi: 10.1192/apt.bp.107.005264*

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## Evolutionary Philosophy:

We all just find ourselves here with a brain, emotions and sense of self (socially made through evolution) that we did not choose, but that we have to figure out.

People do the best they can.

Much of what goes on in our minds is not of 'our design' and not our fault.

We are all in the same boat.

De-pathologizing and de-labelling – understanding unique coping processes.

(Paul Gilbert)

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## We are designed to have relationships

Our brain is designed to expect and respond to care, kindness and soothing from other people. This innate capacity can be enhanced or hindered from childhood, but can be developed at any age.

(Tobyn Bell)

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## Why Zebras don't get ulcers!

When danger has passed for an animal their threat system switches off.

As humans, we can continue to scare ourselves with our imagination, worries and memories which keeps our threat system highly activated after physical danger has passed (Sapolsky, 1994).

(Tobyn Bell)

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## Need compassion for a very tricky brain

**Mindful Brain**

**New Brain: Imagination, Planning, Rumination, Integration**

**Old Brain: Emotions, Motives, Relationship Seeking-Creating**

**Compassion**

(Paul Gilbert)

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## Social Context of Online Gaming and Pornography

Online Gamers and Pornography consumers live in an unreal world where emotions and compassion for self and others are dulled and dissociated

As far as we can tell, these men may not have the sensitivity or the social skills to interact in the real world

Compassion Focused Therapy and Compassionate Social Fitness may help

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## Compassionate Social Fitness

- As a *sensitivity* to the suffering/distress of self and others with a deep *commitment* to try to relieve and prevent it
  - Courage
  - Dedication (Gilbert)

Building and strengthening the compassionate mind by building the capacity to think and feel compassionately

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## Start with Mindfulness

BUDDHA WAS ASKED, "WHAT HAVE YOU GAINED FROM MEDITATION?" HE REPLIED, "NOTHING!" HOWEVER, LET ME TELL YOU WHAT I HAVE LOST: ANGER, ANXIETY, DEPRESSION, INSECURITY, FEAR OF OLD AGE AND DEATH."

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## Three Compassionate Cycles

Face fear	Accept self	Accept others
accept fear	support self	support others
act through emotion	compassion toward self	compassion toward others
Acceptance	Compassion	Forgiveness

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## The Interactive Flow of Compassion

**Self-Focused**

**Compassionate Mind/Self**

**From others**

**To others**

*Each has its own facilitators and inhibitors*

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## Compassion *Focused* Therapy

**Build compassion-focused motives, competencies and identities as inner organising systems**  
**Working with self-criticism and self-conscious emotions (e.g., shame and guilt)**  
**Work with fears, blocks and resistances to compassion and positive emotion**

**Particularly important with online addictions**  
**(Gilbert)**

## We Use Imagery; Why?

Imagery has been shown to be more emotionally powerful than verbal expressions, and it may be particularly for this population who subsists on images

**VERBAL:** Chocolate Cake

or

**IMAGINAL:**



(Tobyn Bell)

## Key Imagery Tasks

**Soothing breathing rhythm**

**Safe 'welcoming' place**

**Compassion color**

**Compassionate friend**

**Compassionate self**

## Fears of Compassion

Compassion focused therapy targets the activation of the soothing system (to gain positive affect) in order to connect thoughts with the emotional experience referred to by those thoughts.

Compassion can also be threatening. Clients can be afraid of compassion not only toward the self, but also from others and for others. This can be particularly true of a population that has been living online without that much interaction with friends and family.

Gilbert, P., McEwen, K., Matos, M., & Rivis, A. (2011). Fears of compassion: Development of three self-report measures. *Psychology and Psychotherapy: Theory, Research and Practice* 84, 239-255.

## Negative beliefs about compassion

**Negative beliefs about the nature of compassion:**  
**Compassion is a weakness**

**Negative beliefs about the value of compassion:**  
**Not useful when times are tough**

**Negative beliefs about the ability to develop compassion:**  
**Would like to develop it but can't**

## Engaging with Compassion

Compassion is not getting rid of painful feelings (e.g., fear, shame, anger) – but engaging with them and experiencing them while feeling compassion for ourselves and others

Compassion is becoming mindful and then being able to choose our behavior

## CFT Resources for Addictions

Manuals from the Centre for Compassion Research and Training  
College of Health and Social Care Research Centre,  
University of Derby, Kedleston Road, Derby, UK.

*Confidence building and Self-Compassion Group Session by Session:*  
*Facilitators Manual* (unpublished), Catherine O'Neill (2014) based on  
Mary Welford's *The Power of Self Compassion* (2013)  
Other manuals from the center are also available and could be revised for  
Online Gaming and Pornography Addictions.

Non-CFT based on AA

*In the shadows of the net: Breaking free of compulsive online sexual  
behavior* (2nd ed.). Carnes, Patrick C., Delmonico, David L., Griffin,  
Elizabeth, & with Moriarity, Joseph. (2007). Center City, Minnesota:  
Hazelton.

## Self Help for Gaming Addiction

**Gaming Addiction (McCloud, 2013)**

**Confront the Addict**

**Help find another activity: Retreats and summer camps, sports**

**Provide emotional support**

**Explore alternative treatments, egs., hypnosis, acupuncture,**

**Addict makes a list of goals, short term and long term**

**Limit online gaming time to two hours so the addict can accomplish  
other goals**

**Visualize accomplishing goals and visualize life addicted**

**Use addictive gaming activity as reward**

**Healthy diet and exercise**

**Sell, throw away or delete addicting game or machine**

**Stop Playing on Computer, use play station for 15 to 20 min**

## Needed: Research and Clinical protocols

Revise Compassion Focused protocols for alcohol and  
substance addictions to build protocols for online  
gaming and pornography addictions

Conduct clinical trials, being sure to include controlled  
studies

## Thank you

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*Building Social Confidence using Compassion Focused Therapy*  
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Russell Kolts

