Kirsten  
So OK then. So I'm really interested in learning about self empathy. This is a very open and non structured interview. I will just sort of, you know, join in where I think it it might be helpful. So starting wherever and however you'd like to.

Sonya  
Yeah.

KIRSTEN   
Can you tell me about self empathy and perhaps experiences that you've had of self empathy and what that means to you?

Sonya  
I said I find it a really interesting term.  
Because empathy, I immediately think of empathy as you empathise with another. You know what that other person is going through, so it sort of makes me think well.  
Not often we do have to examine ourselves, don't we? So we sort of self reflect.  
And study our own behaviours and the way that we deal with things, so that in itself can be empathetic.  
And so yeah, I think that's what self empathy means. I consider myself quite an empathetic person. I think I am an empath.  
Two others quite naturally.  
But yeah, it's interesting to think I might that to myself.

KIRSTEN   
Yeah, yeah, I think it is usually seen as something that we sort of give to others. We show to others, perhaps in a therapeutic relationship. And I wonder, do you think it might be different?  
In the way that we show it to ourselves, or do you think it's the same kind of thing?

Sonya  
I think so. I think that if I find because I'm naturally empathic towards others, I think that puts me at a risk of not being empathic to myself because I'm such a giver and.  
It's very sort of in tune with others.  
I I know I neglect myself sometimes. I am self aware and sort of know what's going on, but I put others before myself. Definitely. I think that's something that I do, which is a blessing and a curse.

KIRSTEN   
OK, that's interesting. So I'm interested in this idea that because you you maybe show it to others that kind of stops you from showing it to yourself. Can you can you unpick that any further?

Sonya  
Yeah.  
Perhaps I'm talking more about.  
He's frozen a little bit there, but yes, I think I think what I'm saying really is self-care. So I'm I'm interested in the difference between self-care, self compassion.  
Empathy. You know, I'm. Yeah, I'm just sort of processing what they what the difference is between those.  
But self.  
I think I'm. I think I'm quite good at understanding why I do the things I do. I think I'm quite self reflective really probably I overanalyze things so I overanalyze myself.  
Quite a lot.

KIRSTEN   
Do you think that's a side effect of the course?

Sonya  
No, I think I've always been like that. That's why I'm doing the course because I think it's just so in me, you know? And my family life XXXXXXXXX Which I think can be a detriment to myself, because I'm then I'm not self person centred, if you know what I mean, yeah.

KIRSTEN   
OK. Yeah, I see. Yeah, absolutely. Yeah, that I I hear that. You made a point earlier about you said something And self empathy. And I'm just wondering, were you kind of saying that you think there's a difference between the three or do you think that they are linked?  
Sonya  
I think that they have to be linked.  
To a certain degree because.  
You need to empathise with yourself to then know that you need the compassion, I guess. So if I think OK, I've just lost my temper XXXXX its driving me mad. I'm so tired. And then I go And I'll get there and and other times I don't lose it. What's the trigger? What's happened? You know, have I given myself enough time? Was something else bothering me? You know, and Trying to work out why I behave in a particular way then helps me. Then I think OK, I just need to take a few deep breaths, forgive myself.  
So of love for myself, know that I'm doing my best. I am enough. You know, I'm doing more than enough and I sort of have to have this conversation with myself to then think it's OK. I can do this and then find the patience again and the grace to carry on.

KIRSTEN

OK, wow. OK, that's really interesting. So is that kind of what you you mean by self empathy? Because I'm hearing elements of forgiveness and self understanding in there and almost like a reset kind of thing.

Sonya  
Yeah.  
I think so. Yeah, I think so. I think that I'm trying to just think, well, if I'm getting it right, like empathy is recognising Standing myself to then care for myself and why I do the things I do, I don't know. You tell me.

KIRSTEN   
You just.  
Yeah, yeah. No, no, this is what it's all about, 'cause we we don't know. I mean, we have some definitions, but I don't know how people experience it. You know, you just froze a little bit there when you were sort of articulating this self empathy. And it sounded really important what you just said.

Sonya  
Yeah.  
Yeah.  
OK, sorry.  
OK. Yeah. So I can't remember what I said now.  
Yeah, I think it's just the sort of the.  
Understanding myself.  
You know, so if I have to empathise towards somebody else.  
I.  
So what they're feeling? Can you hear me?  
Yeah. Yeah. So I sort of understand what they're thinking, what they're feeling.  
And then I can show compassion and grace.  
Instead of.  
Sort of. You know, some people need empathy if they're struggling and their behaviour might be wayward to others. But then an empath would look deeper and understand why.  
And I think I I definitely can do that to myself now.  
Not so much in previous years, but I think as the years have gone on XXXXXXXXXXXX But then there's a lot of love and grace to carry on, you know, getting it wrong and.  
Being in a cycle with that.

KIRSTEN   
  
OK. Yes, I understand that.  
So am I hearing then that you think it's something that comes with experience, you get better at it?

Sonya  
Yes, yes, I would say, yeah, absolutely.  
I think to be honest, I know I'm getting a bit flowery with my language, but I think it comes from love. I think empathy comes from love.  
Definitely.  
I think when you are loving a loving person. Love to me is a verb. It's a doing word. Love is giving, it's sacrificial and it's.  
It's completely putting yourself in that other shoes and showing love. That to me, is empathy.

KIRSTEN   
Oh, that's that's made me go all tingly.

Sonya

Oh yeah.  
Yeah.

Oh yeah, that is to me. That's that's. That's love to me.

KIRSTEN   
OK, OK.  
So it sounds like, yeah, you you have.  
Kind of a a real idea of your understanding of self empathy.  
You mentioned self compassion earlier on.

I wonder if you see that there's a difference between the two, or do you feel like they overlap in some way? Again, you know there's no right answers here, It's whatever your you know is coming up for you.

Sonya  
Yeah, I think so, because I think the compassion is more of an action, whereas you can empathise with somebody and not act upon that at all. So you can be silently empathetic, I think.  
OK.  
I probably, if I think about it, I empathise, possibly with myself more than I'm compassionate towards myself.  
And because if I was to compassionate towards myself, I'd probably make sure I I I eat better, you know, take care of my body better, you know, do things to help me, to help my mental health.  
Whereas I'm aware of what I need, but I always don't implement what I need, so I think perhaps that's the compassion that's the that's the the movement. But so it comes from empathy.

Kirsten  
Yeah, it's interesting because.  
There are those who would see empathy as just being something that happens in the therapeutic relationship.

Whereas self compassion may be much more about self-care that we can just practise on our own.

But if we think about the counselling relationship, you know we're perhaps wanting people to internalise that empathy and then start showing it to themselves.  
So I'm wondering if it's something that could be promoted within therapy, kind of this self empathy.

Sonya  
Yeah.  
Yeah. Well, I think therapy to me.  
My idea of good therapy is when the therapist helps the client see themselves.  
And recognise themselves and.  
Work through the why you know.  
That that to me is is quite an important key.  
To understanding our behaviours.  
So if I was to be feeling very, very low, you know, and I come and I say I'm low.  
And happened. What are the triggers? What's the history?  
You know.

KIRSTEN   
Hmm.  
Yeah. OK. Yeah. No, that's interesting. That does that, that, that makes sense.  
So I'm wondering.  
I've kind of talked about what might drive self empathy and what might encourage it.  
I'm wondering if there's things that you think you know might block self empathy. I mean, you mentioned earlier, if you're showing it a lot to other people, that might almost stop you from showing it to yourself. Do you do you, do you want to elaborate on that at all?

Sonya

Yeah, I think I think people who have a sort of.  
People who who gave that they have that very care they take on the care as a role.  
Are always at risk.  
Of so yeah, somebody who takes on the carer's role, he's always at risk of not caring for themselves, especially if it's in your family. So it's 24/7. So if you have, if you're a carer or a therapist, you go and do your work, then you go away to self, reflect, rest, you know, build yourself again to go out when it's in the home. It's constant. So then you have to be aware of, right? I need to create some time.  
To gather myself in order to be able to give more. So I think timing is key of you know.  
Self just solitude, you know simp simplicity.  
Taking taking time to. Creating time pockets of time to self reflect. Breathe. If you're being triggered and I do think often the triggers.  
Relate, you know, rooted in trauma.  
On whatever level it could be. Deep, terrible trauma, or it could be. I don't want to minimise trauma. But you know, there's different levels of you could, you know, just have an argument with someone and that could be traumatic or it could be a terrible, traumatic experience from the past, you know.

KIRSTEN   
Yeah. OK. OK, that's that's really helpful. Thank you.  
So kind of my sort of coming to the end of of sort of things that I think you've raised here. I was just wondering whether you had an example that you might.  
Be able to share of when you had shown yourself.  
Self empathy. Or perhaps when there was an opportunity to do so. But it was a missed opportunity. I just.  
I was just wondering if anything sprung to mind in terms of an experience or a story or something you might have observed that perhaps you know summarises self empathy and what you've been talking about.

Sonya  
Yeah. Well, I could give you an example of yesterday.  
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Myself, I think when I've done everything I can, I've then sort of melt down myself when nothing's working.  
And that's when I can either end up shouting or crying, or just.  
Oh, nothing's working. I'm trying my best and I think in those moments XXXXXXXX I sort of then felt more love for myself, so I to understand actually this is really intense situation that anybody would really struggle with and it's OK for me to feel like I can't cope and it's when I have those moments. I believe I'm showing myself self empathy.

Kirsten

Thank you for sharing that, especially when it you know, it's something that only happened yesterday.

Is there anything else you wanted to add?

Sonya  
Not really. I just find it really interesting. What you're what you're doing and this the whole concept of this I find fascinating because I think it's something close to my heart.  
Yeah, I think empathy is a very powerful force.  
And if everybody was empathetic, the world would be a better place, yeah.

KIRSTEN   
Yeah.  
Absolutely no. It's a fascinating concept, isn't it?

Sonya  
Thank you so much for your time.