Kirsten  
Let's OK, so you've read and understood the participant information sheet dated the 2nd of August.

Chris  
I did, yes.

Kirsten  
You've had an opportunity to look at the information and ask questions and have them reply to.

Chris  
Absolutely.

Kirsten  
You understand that you're gonna be interviewed and this is recorded. You're happy for your words being used in quotes, publications, presentations, but it will all be anonymized, and if there is anything loose that makes you recognisable it doesn't. It doesn't get used. I would come back to you about it anyway.

Chris  
OK.

Kirsten  
Your participation is voluntary and you can leave the study at any time and it won't affect future studies or employment or anything like that. If you leave the study, you can withdraw your interview date up to 7 days.

Chris  
OK.

Kirsten  
You understand that anonymised data may be looked at by people from Edge Hill or from regulatory authorities for audit purposes, and you give permission for these individuals to see the anonymized data. You understand your consent form will be stored as per the details given in the information sheet.

Chris  
Mm hmm.

Kirsten  
That's essentially on the Secure OneDrive area. You understand that I might have to break confidentiality if you disclose practise. Ha ha. Not that we've got any. Which is unethical or.

Chris  
Yeah.

Kirsten  
And you understand, the information collected might be used to support other research. You agree for the anonymous research data to be shared with other researchers.

Chris  
Yes.

Kirsten  
And finally, you Grant Edge Hill University authority to process your personal and research data. I don't collect any personal data from you anyway.

Chris  
OK.

Kirsten But for the purpose of your participation in the study, you also understand that your contact details won't be passed to anyone else outside the research team.

Chris  
Amazing. Thank you.

KIRSTEN   
This is very much an informal conversation, and there isn't any real set questions and more interested in knowing about your experiences. If you've got any of empathy or what you think it even entails, so start wherever you like, loose and tell me what you think it is or your thoughts about.

Chris  
I feel like my understanding of empathy. Only really grew when I started this course. And before that, I just understood it as sort of like. Being in the same boat as someone. That's as much as I'd. I thought thought of it more as sympathy. I thought of it. Empathy, more of a sad version of. I thought empathy and sympathy were very, very, very similar, which in a sense they are. I did understand it to be that we're sort of in the same boat. But I didn't really. I didn't really consider it to be anything other than sad. But yeah, starting this course and obviously it's one of the core conditions. So it's absolutely vital to have empathy. And it's absolutely beautiful. And when you do have it with someone. In that therapeutic relationship, it's magic. It really is magic. But yeah, it just it. Just expanded my understanding of it and it became something that wasn't. As I'm doing this 'cause, I'm like it wasn't as. I'm thinking about sympathy, so I'm associating it with sad events, and now I know it's much broader than that. And like I say, I see it as something very magical though.

Kirsten  
So it's like a magical thing that we can show to somebody else.

Chris  
Yeah, and. Almost like a trait that I'd like to think everybody has. But is that's the only word I think of. It is magical because we all have it. And you know you can't see it. It isn't like a part of us, but it is a part of us and put my hands over my chest because I'm thinking it is something really in the heart, isn't it? It's something really, because I feel like that's where you'd get it the most if you were to have empathy for someone is sort of like your chest or your or your tummy, perhaps in a sort of sadder or distressing sense. I get that in my stomach. But yeah, I do. I do think it's something. Very special for us humans that we can share, which is beyond word.

Kirsten  
Thank you for that. So I'm quite moved by your description of it as being a magical thing. It's something that's perhaps quite difficult to even. Describe and it's something that perhaps felt within ours. I wondered if you had any. Have you? Do you think you've experienced that when you've given empathy and felt that kind of feeling with somebody?

Chris  
Absolutely. Absolutely. Daily. Yeah. It can be something so little for me and my partner teases me about this, but I can be watching a video on YouTube or on my phone or and it might just be. Like I watched one yesterday and this this quite deep but it was of. Like a Bondi Beach rescue. And it was a baby being resuscitated and it showed the mother. As soon as I saw the mother, I thought, oh, you know what it takes your breath away because she was distraught. She had a hands on her head and I immediately felt like a boom just to my stomach. And I was in her shoes. And I was crying. I was. I was crying. It was. It was really powerful, but and the baby was resuscitated and the baby was fine. So it's all it's all good. But that moment. Seeing the mother and hearing her voice immediately empathised I was in her boat in her shoes. I felt like I was feeling every as if she was travelling it to me. I was feeling everything she was feeling. But yeah, it doesn't have to be. Even as extreme as that, does it. Even if someone's had a had a good day and you know, keep. They're like, oh, you know, it's really good today. Yeah. It was. I'm getting that I can feel that I can see it. I can feel it. I can feel it in me. It's a bodily sensation as well as a mental feeling as well. I definitely have. Definitely have felt it. In more extreme ways. And I feel like I carry them more. I carry them. They they last longer. Even either side of the sort of the bar there so. Really happy. Really like where someone gets a new job. And they've been really working for it. And they're like, yes, I've got it. I remember my mum telling me she's got onto her masters and she phoned me and I'm doing my masters. And Lewis, just like this, even though I was, I was doing the same thing as her. We're both doing a masters. When she got onto it, she phoned me to tell me I felt like I had just been accepted onto it, even though I was already studying one. I felt everything she was feeling every word. It was almost like I could speak the words before she was speaking them because I knew what she was feeling. And and then the other side of it is something really exciting and I feel like you definitely feel that as well and it's those ones that I believe lost the longest, the sort of extreme ones that you do feel deeper, more in your body or sort of last longer.

Kirsten  
Uh.

Chris  
Hmm.

Kirsten  
Yeah, that's that's really interesting. And thank you for sharing those examples. So you feel it's like a really like embodied thing, but you also mentioned maybe a mental process as well. And I just wondered what you think that mental process is that maybe does that then enable you to feel the way you feel or do you think the two things are separate? I'm wondering what mentally. Is going on, say when somebody.

Chris  
Yeah.

Kirsten  
I don't know. The baby's being resuscitated and the mother is really sad and upset. I don't know what? What mentally do you think might be going on for you then?

Chris  
Yeah, that's interesting because part of me feels like. It is automatic, straight into the body, but there's definitely definitely an element of. There's something going on mentally. And perhaps it is like a reflection reflexivity sort of process. Where we perhaps see whether.It might be even something to keep us safe, to see whether it is actually, as in that situation.

Kirsten  
That's interesting.

Chris  
I don't know. That's definitely I could. I could think about that for a while. Yeah, 'cause. There's definitely a lot for me immediately in my body. I feel it in my body. Perhaps first. And perhaps it's just like the rational brain, you know, what am I supposed to do in this situation? Because if that was actively me in that situation. You know, it's like, what do you do? Do you do? Do you call 999? Do you start resuscitating? Do you shout for help? Do you go over to to help the baby yourself, you know? That mother was just distressed and you know rightly so and immediately it was in my stomach and it was sort of then in my head as a what would I do, you know? And in a way, perhaps that's just keeping me safe so I know I don't have to take those steps. Don't have to phone an ambulance. Don't have to, because I'm watching it through a through a phone screen, so perhaps it's that separation of of keeping you safe or rationalising what's going on. Maybe. Don't know. There's definitely feelings and and thoughts. And you know what to do next. What? What am I feeling and noticing what's going on in my body through my head as well. Like, oh, my stomach's hurting now. My stomach's really hurting. I can feel my eyes welling if I can feel a lump in my throat. You know. It's. Yeah. I feel like it's sort of like the voice in your head that's almost telling you narrating, perhaps. What's going on.

Kirsten  
Yeah. And keeping that element of separation.

Chris  
Yeah, yeah. Mm hmm. OK. So that's kind of in relationship to to other people. You know, you feel like it's more than being in the same boat more than in their shoes. It's quite an embodied thing. I'm now wondering whether you think you might not think this at all. You can empathise with yourself. So I don't know something. What's happened? Something not so good has happened. Do you think it's possible to show yourself that same level of feeling that you feel able to show other people?

Chris  
Hmm. I'd like to think yes. I feel like it's almost easier to empathise with other people. And I'm not sure if that's just like an innate trait for us as humans, maybe like a survival instinct. But for myself, I feel like I probably empathise with parts of me. So in a in a way like my stomach was hurting my brains empathise. Oh no, my stomach is hurting. I can feel this in my throat, can feel my eyes welling up. That's really, I've never thought about that before. 'Cause it. It's almost like it. Doesn't seem to work.

Kirsten  
Yeah.

Chris  
Because when you think of empathy well for me, I always think of another person I should think of, relating to others in in whatever is going on with them, relating to them when it's going on for me. Obviously I'm actively feeling something. So empathising with. It's almost like meditating then, isn't it? It's almost like focusing on what's going on. But having like a old oh, I'm really just in my head now whilst I'm thinking about this. This is interesting. Yeah. I mean, could you broaden it to self-care as a form of empathy, self love, self-care, self-awareness? Hmm. I'd I'd like to think that I'm on the journey to if self empathy is is a thing which I'm sure it is, I'd like to think I'm that I'm getting that.

Kirsten  
Commonly, I mean it isn't really a an explored topic at all. But the the research that is out there is very much about self understanding self-care as you said you know. So if we understand ourselves, can we care better for ourselves? Can we be less judgmental towards ourselves? I suppose so. That's kind of what's already written, but you actually talked about something else. We're talking, you know, you still can't think about almost like looking in on yourself, almost like a meditative. State, which I thought was really fascinating actually.

Chris  
Yeah, the the way that I was thinking about it is for me, like I said, empathy is about 2 beings so that empathy almost like, has to exist between because one needs to understand the other. But when you take that one away, I feel like it's inside the other. And I know that meditation. Is a absolutely brilliant way to sort of look into yourself and to understand yourself that self exploration. Self understanding, self-awareness. All that. So for me it was immediately meditation would be the go to. As as like an outline of how to do this.

Kirsten  
Yeah.

Chris  
Really interesting.

Kirsten  
No, I'm. I'm fascinated by what you said that, I mean, would it be right then to think? Could you see yourself as sort of two selves? Could there be, is it, would you see it as that kind of thing?

Chris  
Yeah, in almost like a a spiritual sense and a physical sense perhaps or. Cognitive academic self in the head and then the feeling. An empathetic self, you know. The. I might be wrong, but that's my thinking of it. I can. I can see it. I can see what I'm thinking of as sort of like a person in a person. But yeah. I'm thinking now I don't know whether anybody would think of it like that, and I'll be fascinated to see how other people think about it. Because I feel like it's almost superficial to just offer self-care. I feel like it's much deeper than that because empathy, like I said, is magical. So it's not just I'll spend time by myself and get to know myself. It's no, no, no, it's. This is something much bigger, much deeper, much more magical, much more special. So it goes beyond that for me. I feel like it's it's something that. I definitely don't understand. But I would describe it as multiple.

Kirsten  
So you see it as a positive thing.

Chris  
Yeah, definitely, even even in cases where it is. You know. OK. Don't say like traumatic, but you know if if it was a case that was traumatic or it was. A negative emotion. I definitely see it as almost like a superpower. I don't have. I don't. I don't know. Maybe. Maybe it's maybe it's not. Maybe it's just because I'm very new to this, but. I, like I say, I do find it really special. I never said that about 7 Times Now, but it's it is. To me, and I think it's. Perhaps I do need to read more into it, but as I feel it, it feels like it's something that can't be measured. Oh, almost like. It's a given and we've accepted it. But it is so precious. Because it builds those connections, it it helps us help others. It helps us celebrate together. It helps us grieve together. So it is just truly special and magical. Why would you want to measure that?

Kirsten  
That's really fascinating. Thank you. Tell me if I've this wrong that you. If you've got it for yourself, you're more able to help others.

Chris  
Hmm.

Kirsten  
Or, you know if you've got this magic, if you've got this really special thing going on for yourself and you've got these two Aspects of yourself. Does that then help you show empathy to other people? Or would would the two not go together?

Chris  
I don't know if I did say that, but I do agree with that. 'Cause, it's almost like it. You're practising it constantly and you're so in tune with it and it's it's working. You don't need to have another person to have that interaction to sort of flick that empathy switch. If you've got that self empathy. It's almost as if it doesn't turn off because it's it's it's being. And it's there and it's not an optional thing. Like in in a tree that's just existing. Yeah, it sounds very it sounds special. It's it does sound really special and like saying magical. I do think it's. Like being on this course, like I said, has opened my eyes to it and. I'd have said numerous occasions in university, but it is this course is logical because you get to sort of like activate those. Switches so that they are remain constant. Like I said, it's a way of being, isn't it? So using those sort of like core conditions, of course one of them is empathy. I feel like that self empathy must have grown because it's always on now. I would never really have sat and cried at a video, but now that I'm actively using it and and so aware of it, I'm so so aware that it's it's a thing and it's it's so cool. And that sounds really corny, but it's so cool because it's just there and it's on. And it helps with so much and you literally can connect with a person so much quicker and deeper with it. Yeah, waffling, but.

Kirsten  
No. I'm mesmerised.

Chris  
Thank you for coming to my Ted talk.

Kirsten  
Brilliant. So you think it's something then that you've developed over the course and you said that the you thought the court, there's something about the course? So what? What do you think it is that? Change. You know you've you've undergone this change. What? What do you think it's been? Maybe the main ingredients all that.

CHris  
I'd say it's almost like a willingness to be. It's just a. I feel like I did have empathy beforehand, but it was kind of. It could be said to be sort of like embarrassing sometimes. You know, if I listen to like my, I went to a concert way before this course and I remember crying at the concert and I'm thinking like, oh, I gotta stop it. Like, come on. But I was enjoying it so much I must have felt so many emotions that I started crying. But immediately was like, stop it. That's silly. But now I'm like if I hear something and I wanna cry, I'll cry. I'm there. I'm feeling every feeling. So I'm it's it's more of like a self acceptance. Self-awareness. But like on a grander scale. And in that empathy has been allowed, my personal empathy has been allowed to sort of just flourish. I'm. I'm really conscious of how, like, corny this sounds.

KIRSTEN   
No, not at all. This is my research. This is this is fine.

Chris  
Of yeah, of course. Of course. Sorry. True, true.

Kirsten  
This is no don't apologise. This is about everybody's individual experience of empathy. I think you said something earlier about and you maybe need to read more about it, but I'm interested in your experience of that and you've given me your experience. So it's fascinating to actually. It's really like, interesting.

Chris  
Yeah, interesting.

Kirsten  
Because a lot of people not in my research, but. You know the the bit that you read absolutely relates it to self-care. Self understanding. But you said earlier it's much much more than that, it's it's kind of on another level. So that it makes it quite difficult to describe really.

Chris  
Yeah. And I feel like that's why I've called it magical and special about a million times because I don't know how else you could sum it up. It it reminds me of the I believe there's like 16 points of what relational depth is. And you know, they're all like connection magic, spiritual shared. And it reminds me of that. But in application to yourself, when considering self empathy. And that's such like a personal magical experience for me personally. But those words? I know they they apply so beautiful to the therapeutic relationship, which of course requires empathy. But there's like a deeper level of understanding which would enhance yourself with others. Yeah.

Kirsten  
OK, so almost. I'm a hearing right that. You almost can increase your relational depth with yourself.

Chris: Yeah, yeah.

Kirsten  
Which in turn helps you relate better to others.

Chris  
Yeah. Yeah, almost as if. It's the this course has been like the beginning of that cycle, improving 1, improving the other, improving 1, improving the other. And although you may become more sensitive, so you may require more barriers to look after yourself more boundaries. I do believe it, it's enhanced my relationship absolutely. Because it's just this sort of self disclosure, it's almost like this is what you get. This is me. That's that's it. I'm not apologetic for it. Because it's wonderful. Yeah.

Kirsten  
Yeah, I agree. Yeah. Was there anything else that you wanted to say about any of this stuff?

Chris  
Not that I can think of. I'm I'm I'm very, very excited to see. Your poem poems. I'm. I'm so excited. 'cause. I feel like this is is much more. Creative than I thought. This is like going to be so. I just want to say deep it's going to be so deep. Do you know what I mean? That's really. Yeah. It's gonna be really lovely. I'm really excited. And like, I'm envious of this journey you're on because this is going to be so nice for you to hear about other people's experience of it. It's really exciting. Yeah, I can't wait. I can't wait to hear about it.

Kirsten  
It has been wonderful. It has been good. Yeah, I've really enjoyed it.

Chris  
Oh, that's so lovely. That's so lovely.

Kirsten  
Yeah. Nice. It is nice. Yeah, right. Well, thank you so much.

Chris  
Thank you.