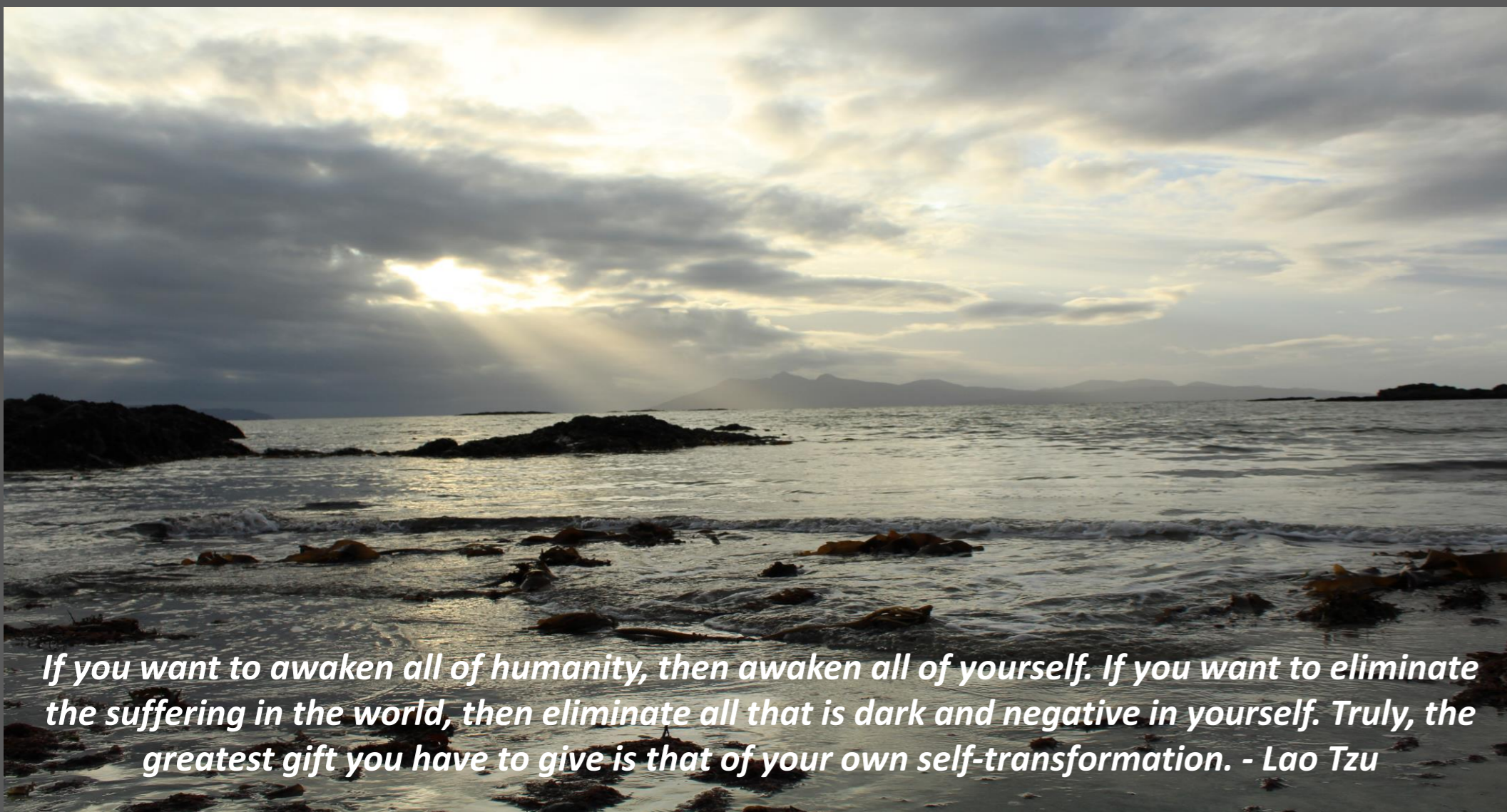


Pernicious Influences & Harmful Effects: *Self-Critical, Self-Harming & Resulting Emotion Processes in Socially Anxious Clients*

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If you want to awaken all of humanity, then awaken all of yourself. If you want to eliminate the suffering in the world, then eliminate all that is dark and negative in yourself. Truly, the greatest gift you have to give is that of your own self-transformation. - Lao Tzu

Overview

Aim: This study was intended to examine the self-critical, self-harming and resulting emotion processes of socially anxious clients who participated in the Strathclyde University Emotion-Focused Therapy for Social Anxiety research protocol (EFT-SA).

Method: Utilising client self-reporting from a measurement tool, the Self-Relationship Questionnaire (SRQ), four participants were selected based on high pre-therapy scores within the respective domains of self-neglect, self-control, self-attack and self-affiliation. A qualitative discourse analysis of the session two therapy transcript was conducted for each participant to identify the main themes of self-attack.

Results: This investigation revealed both obvious and subtle client process indicators of different kinds of self-attack: Objects of Self-Criticism, Direct & Indirect Strategies for Self-Criticism, the Modes of Self-Harm (Self-Attack, Hostile Control, Hostile Neglect & Hostile Freedom), and the Emotional Effects.

Conclusion: In addition to mapping the nuances of self-attacking discourse, the varying dimensions of self-criticism, self-harm and their emotional impact are incorporated into a redefinition of self-attack.

Figure 1. Objects and Strategies of Self-Criticism.

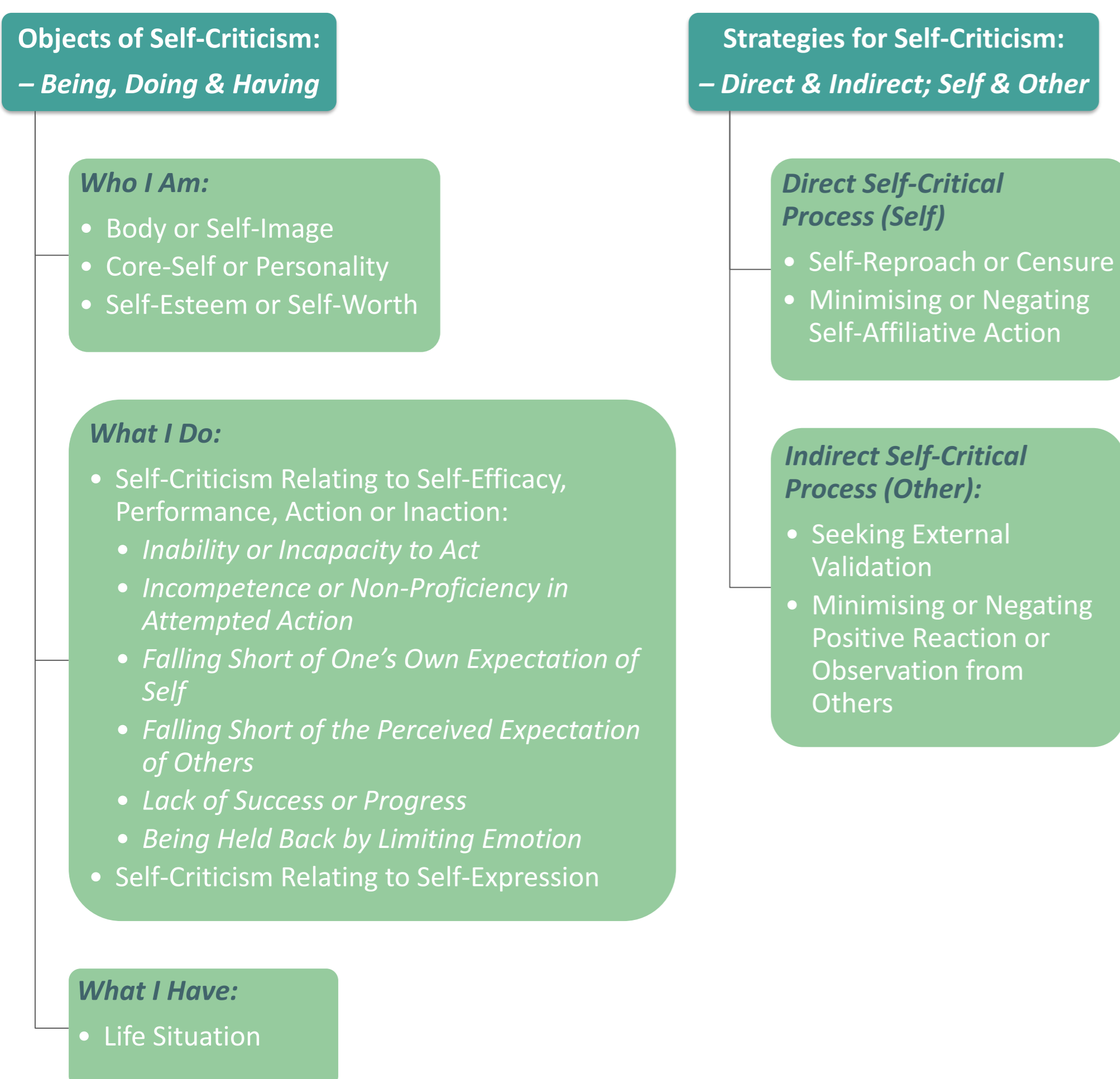


Figure 2. Modes of Self-Harm.

Self-Attack:

- Self-Derogation, Loathing or Rejection
- Negative Comparison of Self to Others
- Self-Punitive or Hostile

Hostile Control:

- Pressurising, Stressing or Overburdening Self:
 - Expecting Attack, Threat or Danger
 - Expecting Judgement, Criticism or Rejection
 - Meeting One's Own High Expectation
 - Meeting the Perceived Expectation of Others
 - Expecting Failure
 - Expecting to be Ignored, Neglected or Overlooked
- Monitoring or Controlling Self – Restraining, Complying or Intruding
- Monitoring or Controlling Others – Enforced Propriety or Conformity
- Self-Doubt or Indecisiveness

Hostile Neglect:

- Minimising, Negating or Avoiding One's Own Feelings
- Minimising or Negating Positive Reaction or Observation from Others
- Acquiescing or Affirming Negative Reaction or Observation from Others
- Self-Neglect or Abandonment
- Reacting in a Flooded or Overwhelmed Emotional State

Hostile Freedom or Separation from Others:

- Isolating or Distancing Self from Others
- Relinquishing Personal Responsibility
- Self-Entitlement or Grandiosity

Figure 3. Emotional Effects of Self-Criticism & Self-Harm.

Expressing One's Feelings in Relation to Negative Treatment of Self:

- Fear or Anxiety
- Sadness, Grief or Emotional Pain
- Anger or Frustration with Self or Other
- Guilt or Shame

Redefining Self-Attack

Self-attack: A synergistic activity comprising the three superordinate domains of self-criticism, self-harm and their emotional impact. Operating as an interconnected gestalt, the elucidation of these domains emerged from the discourse analysis, presenting as a cyclical process. Creating problems and interfering with personal goals, each variable contained a self-sabotaging aspect that directly affected and sustained the others.

Implications:

- Substantive evidence for broadening our definition of self-attack.
- Relevance of subtle and implied self-critical processes viewed in association with behavioural and emotional impact.
- Enhancing awareness of the 'clinical representations' of the inner-critic.
- Supporting relevance of SRQ and multiple methods for measuring self-relationship.
- Broadening awareness of subtle self-sabotage.