



## Cuddle Puddles

### What is a cuddle puddle?

If you've not heard of cuddle puddles before, they might sound a little unconventional! "Why would I want to hug with strangers?", you might ask... But this emerging approach has already proven very popular in the US and mainland Europe and is now gaining momentum within the therapeutic community here in the UK, having accumulated strong scientific backing. After all, nurturing touch is a fundamental human need and something that is sadly increasingly lacking in the modern world.

So - what's it all about...?

A cuddle puddle is a gathering of individuals who want to experience the contact and connection of non-sexual touch with others in a safe space. A place to hold and be held in a nurturing environment free from discrimination or judgement, to be seen and to be vulnerable. They can be very soothing, healing and also very fun! But it's not just turning up and cuddling with strangers, a big part of the session, which of course would feel very daunting, even off-putting for most; As the cuddle puddle facilitator, I divide the session into two parts; the first involves discussion and some exercises that help us to get acquainted and to understand and explore boundaries and consent - how to recognise and communicate our own and how to respect those of others.

We'll have a short break and then the second half is our time to get cuddled up either in one big group, small pods or just one to one. There is absolutely no obligation to cuddle, touch or be touched during the puddle.

Cuddle puddles aren't limited to just cuddling; it's your opportunity to ask for the caring, supportive touch that you want. We explore more about asking for the touch you'd like to receive in the first half of the session. It could be a back rub, a hand massage, having your hair stroked or even just sitting back to back with someone.

Everyone stays fully clothed throughout the session and touch is to remain platonic at all times, this includes no kissing. A simple guide to keep in mind is that all touch should be appropriate to

still be conducted if there were children present and anywhere that swimwear would cover is off limits. Hands must stay on the outside of clothing at all times.

### Who are cuddle puddles for?

As long as you are over 18 years and not under the influence of recreational drugs or alcohol then the cuddle puddles are open to you. I aim to make the cuddle puddles as inclusive as possible and I want to ensure everyone feels they are welcome to attend. If you'd like to discuss accessibility or any other concerns you have about attending then please do contact me in advance or come and speak to me at the start of the puddle. It's extremely important to me that everyone feels they are heard and seen and valued; I work hard to hold a space where we can all leave our masks at the door and be met exactly as we are for that's where real connection and healing can be found.

### What should I wear?

There's nothing specific to wear, just come in something comfortable that makes you feel relaxed and cosy. I'm a fan of cuddly textures that I enjoy the feel of, so perhaps a fluffy jumper and tracksuit bottoms, you could even wear your favourite onesie if you want to! Warm, comfy socks are also a nice addition. That said, some skin to skin contact is beneficial; short sleeved t-shirts are a good idea when it's warm enough but only if you are comfortable with that.

Try to avoid clothing that might restrict your cuddling or feel uncomfortable to yourself and others for example tight jeans or big belt buckles or scratchy fabrics. The other thing to consider is that we want clothing to be appropriate, especially in warmer weather; no swimwear for example, a minimum requirement would be shorts and t-shirt. If you want to wear a skirt or dress then please have some shorts or leggings underneath.

I also ask that a good standard of personal hygiene is adhered to but without strong perfumes or aftershave.

### What should I bring?

First and foremost, I just ask that you just bring yourself and your conscious presence to the cuddle puddle, along with an intention to be open, respectful and welcoming to each other.

There will be mats, blankets and cushions provided but to make the space extra cosy and to make it feel more of a communal event, please feel free to bring cushions or blankets to use for yourself or to add to the collective pillow and blanket pile (you can take home with you again afterwards).

There will be drinking water available but please bring your own snack and drinks if you'd like them during the break. Please try not to bring any products containing nuts in case any fellow cuddlers have an allergy - if you do have any allergies please do let me know in advance of the puddle.

### What if I don't want to take part in the exercises or cuddles?

As I said before, there is no obligation to take part in any of the touch based elements if you do not feel comfortable, you are in total control of how involved you want to be. It can be daunting to come to a cuddle puddle, particularly for the first time, you might really want to get involved but when you actually arrive, you may not feel ready or comfortable in participating physically. Please don't let this put you off attending, we can talk through anything that's coming up for you during the puddle and you'll still receive the benefit of listening to the discussions and observing the exercises even if you don't feel able to get involved. You will still be just as welcome and valued. Observing or only participating in the parts you feel comfortable with will help you to see how the cuddle puddles are conducted and hopefully, it'll help to reassure you and feel more comfortable about participating in future puddles. If you still feel uncomfortable or think that a group cuddle is not for you, perhaps a one to one cuddle therapy session with me would be more suitable.

### What if I become emotional or experience uncomfortable thoughts/feelings during the cuddle puddle?

Each cuddle puddle is completely different depending on the people, the energy or vibe of the group and how everyone is feeling. They can be fun and lighthearted, bringing joyous connections with others but they can also be very moving and emotionally charged, sometimes a mixture of all of those things. There is no way of knowing for certain how you'll feel until it happens. What's important to remember is that however you feel is absolutely valid and I encourage you to really embrace whatever comes up for you; cuddle puddles have brought profound healing and comfort to me over the years so I invite you to let them be what you need them to be. At the same time, I'd like to also say how important it is that if we are cuddling or sat with someone who is having some emotions come up they need to process, that we are mindful not to rush in to try and fix them. Our caring nature can kick in and want to soothe or console someone, to stop them from hurting, but sometimes this can interrupt the process of them letting out everything that they need to. It's best just to be with them quietly unless they open up dialogue, or maybe just ask what they need; we know within us what we need if we allow ourselves to listen to that. If anyone seems in distress or in need of support, please do bring it to my attention if I'm not already aware.

### What if I become aroused?

I thought it important not to shy away from this question because it's one that many want to ask but don't feel able to. While this is a non sexual, platonic activity, there may be times when you start to feel aroused from being in close proximity with others, this is a completely natural response so there is no need for shame or embarrassment. I want to add that this can happen to anyone and is not just aimed at men. Changing position or taking a break is the best way to deal with the situation. If you are cuddling with someone and you become aware that they are aroused then you should also suggest changing position or taking a break. I do not want anyone

to feel uncomfortable. I would please ask that such occasions are treated discreetly and with respect by all involved. If at any time you feel uncomfortable about a situation please do come and speak with me.

Any other questions?

If you still have questions or concerns that haven't been answered here please do reach out to me on +447954136107 or [hugs@consciousconnectedtouch.com](mailto:hugs@consciousconnectedtouch.com)

I look forward to seeing and hugging you at a Cuddle Puddle event soon!

Samii.