



Compassion Cultivation Training Syllabus

Compassion Cultivation Training (CCT) is an eight-week program designed to develop the qualities of compassion and kindness for oneself and for others. CCT integrates traditional contemplative practices with contemporary psychology and scientific research on compassion.

Dates: Thursdays, September 23rd to November 11th, 2021

Time: 6:30 pm - 8:30 pm

Location: Online (link to zoom meeting will be sent by email)

Course materials will be posted at: [ConnectingCompassion.ca](https://www.connectingcompassion.ca)

INSTRUCTORS

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WHAT IS COMPASSION?

“Compassion is a sense of concern that arises when we are confronted with suffering and feel motivated to see that suffering relieved.”

“Compassion offers the possibility of responding to suffering with understanding, patience, and kindness rather than fear and repulsion.”

“Compassion is what connects the feelings of empathy to acts of kindness, generosity, and other expressions of our altruistic tendency.”

“Compassion is fundamental to our basic nature as human beings. Connecting with our compassionate part, nurturing it, and relating to ourselves, others and the world around us from this place is key to our happiness as individuals and our societal well-being.”

Jinpa, T. Phd, A Fearless Heart, Hudson Street Press, (2015)

Compassion goes beyond feeling more empathy and concern for others. It develops the strength to be with suffering (our own and others), have resilience in the face of life's challenges, and the courage to take compassionate action (toward ourselves and others). It combines the natural human qualities of empathy and altruism.

The quality of compassion supports a wide range of goals, from improving personal relationships to making a positive difference in the world. Cultivating compassion can also support one's own health, happiness and well-being. Preliminary research, which will be shared during the classes, suggests that CCT and similar programs can increase self-compassion and self-care, reduces stress, anxiety, and enhance connection with others.

CAPACITY FOR COMPASSION

Humans have a natural capacity for compassion. However, everyday stress, social pressure and life experience can make it difficult to express this capacity.

The CCT program was developed at Stanford University, Centre for Compassion and Altruism Research, by a team of contemplative scholars, clinical psychologists, and researchers to provide

a supportive environment, proper tools and steady care to develop the capacity to respond compassionately, consistently. The program includes: developing skills in how we relate to others and ourselves; how to intentionally choosing compassionate thoughts and actions; instruction in compassion, based on the most recent science; and strengthening daily meditation practices to build the qualities of awareness, focus, compassion and courage. Our two-hour weekly classes: support dialogue in pairs and small group listening and communication exercises; supplemental reading, research; and practices for on the spot needs in daily life.

REFERENCE BOOK

Thupten Jinpa, 2015, *A Fearless Heart: How the Courage to Be Compassionate Can Transform Our Lives*

SPECIFIC COURSE CONTENT

Each session will be accompanied by a meditation practice and suggestions for daily, 'real life' awareness practices. All participants will have access to a set of eight guided meditation practices focusing on the topic of each week.

Week 1: Settling and Focusing

Introducing attention training and the role of intention. In this step we explore the definition of compassion and the skills of mindfulness, meditation, and self-awareness. This step is considered the foundation for the other practices in this program.

Week 2: Compassion and Kindness for a Loved One

Continue exploration of what compassion is, and relationship to kindness and mindfulness. Learning to recognize how the experiences of compassion and kindness feel when they occur for a loved one. The meditation and practical exercises offered in this step aim to help practitioners generate thoughts and feelings of kindness and compassion.

Week 3: Self Compassion

Developing skills such as compassionate self talk, greater self-acceptance and self mentoring in the face of setbacks. Connecting with one's own feelings and needs and relating to them with compassion is the basis for developing a compassionate stance toward others. Exploring barriers to self-compassion.

Week 4: Self Kindness

Exploring what it would mean to offer qualities of warmth, joy, and gratitude for oneself. While the previous step focused on self-acceptance, this step focuses on developing appreciation for oneself. Specific exercises will be offered to explore what provides sense of connection, meaning, happiness, health and well-being.

Week 5: Common Humanity

Exploring further the basis for compassion toward self and others through recognizing our shared common humanity. Discussion of why it is easier to have empathy for some people. Appreciating the contributions of others to our lives. Recognizing how, as human beings, we are deeply interconnected.

Week 6: Broadening Compassion

Deeper exploration of what compassion is and what it is not. Extending compassion to more 'challenging' subjects. Bringing awareness to challenges to and the benefits of compassion in everyday life.

Week 7: Active Compassion

Focusing on the compassionate action that goes beyond feeling of other's suffering. Strengthening courage to be with suffering, and willingness to help relieve that suffering.

Week 8: Closing and Integrated Daily Compassion Cultivation Practice

In this final class, the essential elements of all steps are combined into an integrated compassion meditation practice that can continue to be done daily by participants who choose to adopt it. There will be also an opportunity to reflect on the experience, learning and challenges of this course.

MEDITATION SUPPORT

Guided meditation practices for each of the weeks of CCT can be found on a password protected page of the Compassion Institute website:

<https://www.compassioninstitute.com/meditations/>

Password: CCTaudio

You can also access the same meditation practises read by Magda, at Connecting Compassion site under For CCT Students tab: <http://connectingcompassion.ca/cct-alumni/meditations/>

Password: Reconnect

The guided meditations were created specifically to help you practice the meditation techniques we learn in class. There are a range of recordings by master CCT Trainers. You can select the recordings that work best for you. Each Trainer has their own style and approach.

It is highly recommended that you practice these meditations in the order they are presented, and only after they are introduced in class. However, it is always appropriate to return to a previous meditation if it feels more supportive or appealing to you.

RESOURCES FOR ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

Because compassion is a response to one's own or others' suffering, it is not unusual for these practices and class discussions to bring up strong emotions. If you are experiencing thoughts, emotions, or memories that you feel unable to process on your own, you may want to seek out psychological, religious, or other counseling.