CULTIVATING COMPASSION

Jennifer Sippel, PhD
SETTLE THE MIND PRACTICE

Way we begin each CCT class
CHECK-IN

➤ Groups of 3, and maybe a group of 4 if needed
➤ Please consider finding people you have never met
➤ 10 minutes
➤ Whatever willing to share with your small group
  ➤ Intention for the workshop
  ➤ Experience with person behind the eyes
  ➤ Brief settling the mind practice
LARGE GROUP DEBRIEF
TOGETHER, WE WILL...

➢ Contemplate a definition of compassion

➢ Try compassion meditations

➢ Consider the possibility we all can intentionally strengthen this innate human capacity

➢ Learn about one of the many programs available

➢ Find out what happened when health care professionals engaged in the program

➢ Develop ideas for cultivating compassion in our own lives
WE WILL ACCOMPLISH IT BY...

- Didactic Information (Science/Philosophy)
- Experiential Exercises
- Compassion Meditations
- Connecting with Each Other (Listening/Sharing)
- Contemplating Action Plans
- Closing Circle
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A human being is a part of the whole called by us universe, a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings as something separated from the rest, a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest to us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty.

-Albert Einstein
THAT'S A TALL ORDER!

Got Compassion???

Stable trait vs teachable skill...
Compassion as a complex neurological, human process...Good News!

...A teachable skill...Strengthen our innate capacities...Cultivate motivation...
AWARENESS
EMPATHY
WISH

Motivation to do something
EMPATHY

VIDEO
EMPATHY

Personal experience
REFLECTION QUESTIONS

➤ When was a time I recognized suffering in someone else?

➤ When was a time I recognized suffering in myself?

➤ When was a time I felt an urge to distance myself from my own or another's suffering?

➤ Contemplate how connecting with my own suffering and experience, might relate to how I connect with others' suffering and experience.

➤ Contemplate how empathy and connecting with others might be important to your informal and formal leadership style and strategy.
LOVING-KINDNESS MEDITATION
LOVING-KINDNESS MEDITATION
WHEN FACED WITH SUFFERING

How do we respond?
A moment of self-compassion can change your day. A string of such moments can change the course of your life.

-Christopher Germer, The Mindful Path to Self-Compassion
Grief can be the garden of compassion. If you keep your heart open through everything, your pain can become your greatest ally in your life's search for love and wisdom.

-Rumi
Thupten Jinpa: primary author of Compassion Cultivation Training
CCT WEEKS 1–5: SHORING UP PERSONAL RESOURCES

➤ Week 1: Introduction to the course and introduction to settling and focusing the mind
➤ Introduction to the course and connecting with the intention for taking CCT right now. Brief introduction to the skill of settling and focusing the mind.

➤ Week 2: Settling and focusing the mind (step 1)
➤ Cultivating the skill of focusing the mind through breath focus meditation. This step is considered foundational for any other practice in this program.

➤ Week 3: Loving-kindness and compassion for a loved one (step 2)
➤ Learning to recognize how the experiences of love and compassion feel like when they occur for a loved one. The meditation and practical exercises offered in this step aim to help practitioners recognize the physical and physiological signs of the feelings of warmth, tenderness, concern, and compassion towards a loved one.

➤ Week 4: Compassion for oneself (step 3a)
➤ Learning to develop qualities such as greater self-acceptance, tenderness, nonjudgment and caring in self-to-self relations. Connecting with one’s own feelings and needs and relating to them with compassion is the basis for developing a compassionate stance toward others.

➤ Week 5: Loving-kindness for oneself (step 3b)
➤ Learning to develop qualities of warmth, appreciation, joy, and gratitude in self-to-self relationship. While the previous step focused on self-acceptance, this step focuses on developing appreciation for one’s self.
A moment of self-compassion can change your day. A string of such moments can change the course of your life.

-Christopher Germer, The Mindful Path to Self-Compassion
CCT WEEKS 6-9: WIDENING CIRCLE OF COMPASSION

➤ Week 6: Embracing shared common humanity and developing appreciation of others (step 4)
➤ Establishing the basis for compassion toward others through recognizing our shared common humanity, and appreciating the kindness of others and how human beings are deeply interconnected.

➤ Week 7: Cultivating compassion for others (step 5)
➤ On the basis of the previous step, participants begin to cultivate compassion for all beings by moving from focusing on a loved one to focusing on a neutral person, then on a difficult person, and finally on all beings.

➤ Week 8: Active compassion practice (Tong-len) (step 6)
➤ This step involves explicit evocation of the altruistic wish to do something about others’ suffering. In formal sitting practice, this essentially takes the form of a visualization practice where the practitioner imagines taking away the suffering of others and giving them what is beneficial in oneself. This practice is known as Tong-len or “giving and taking”.

➤ Week 9: Closing and integrated daily compassion cultivation practice
➤ In this final class, the essential elements of all six steps are combined into an integrated compassion meditation practice that can continue to be done daily by participants who choose to adopt it.
Now that we know what CCT entails...what are some initial outcomes from CCARE?

Enhancing Compassion: A randomized Controlled trial of a CCT program (2012)
Now that we know what CCT entails...what are some initial outcomes from CCARE?
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**Enhancing Compassion: A randomized Controlled trial of a CCT program (2012)**


**A wandering mind is a less caring mind: daily experience during CCT. (2016)**
Self-Report Measures
Baseline & Post-Course

STUDY 1
MINDFULNESS
&
COMPASSION
Study 1: Total Participants in Attendance

- w1: 90
- w2: 77
- w3: 63
- w4: 63
- w5: 55
- w6: 62
- w7: 57
- w8: 46
STUDY 1 RESULTS

➤ n=37

➤ After the course, participants reported improved mindfulness in the areas of observe, awareness, non-judgment, and non-reaction

➤ No shift in compassion scores
MINDFULNESS
COMPASSION
BURNOUT
SELF-COMPASSION
PSYCHOLOGICAL FLEXIBILITY

Self-Report Measures
Baseline & Post-Course
Study 2: Total Participants in Attendance

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Participants</th>
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<td>21</td>
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STUDY 2

➤ n=21

➤ replicates Study 1 with mindfulness improvement

➤ Study 2 showed T2 improvements in compassion as well

➤ People who don't report doing daily meditation continue to get worse in burnout by T2, while those who report doing daily practice are buffered against any additional burnout

➤ No significant correlation between #classes attended and outcomes
BRIEF, ANONYMOUS FOLLOW-UP SURVEY

➤ Reasons missed classes: work duties, life stress, family emergency, work schedule/pt care, weather, scheduled & unscheduled leave

➤ 56/57 respondents said YES, they would recommend the course to a colleague

➤ Why or why not? Sample quotes on following slides
I think it is a wonderful opportunity for VA employees to get in touch with where compassion really starts and using that knowledge and the techniques to better serve the veteran population.

-VANTHCS Employee & CCT Participant
It helped me to enhance my compassion towards myself as well as toward the Veterans. It also helped me to filter some anxieties I was feeling and helped with a closer relationship with God through meditation.

-VANTHCS Employee & CCT Participant
...the all-encompassing aspects of compassion-- that is, how it's tied to the self and other, and especially the concept that without self-compassion, compassion for other is not likely to occur.

-VANTHCS Employee & CCT Participant
It has really helped me with my temper.

-VANTHCS Employee & CCT Participant
WHAT NOW??

➤ Identify two or more ways I can incorporate compassion practices into my
  ➤ Personal Life
  ➤ Professional Life
  ➤ Work group
  ➤ Facility/Organization
  ➤ Local Community
THANK YOU & QUESTIONS?

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