

## **We Don't Have to Feel Kind to Authentically Be It**

Actual changes in neural systems underlie compassion, altruism and empathy and can be developed through Mindfulness Training.

We feel that one of the most important contributions that we are making with this resource is the reminder (constant) that we can learn to consciously connect with all others (even difficult others) in ways that transcend our basic 'off the assembly line' PFP brain/ego.

**“People who received this compassion training showed increased activity in neuro networks involved in understanding the suffering of others and regulating emotions.” (Reference research study - Compassion Training Alters Altruism and Neural Responses To Suffering – Helen Y. Weng, Center for Investigation of Healthy Minds, University of California, Berkeley)**

Examples of further research are included in the summary below.

If you practice the application (app) found at [www.centreforconsciouscare.ca-resources-compassion-practice](http://www.centreforconsciouscare.ca-resources-compassion-practice), for a total of approximately 20 hours, the region in **your brain** responsible for activation of compassion, altruism and empathy will grow! Also see the compassion practice outlined below.

Our intentions for others really do matter for both us and them. The research associated with this part of this resource proves that statements that you make to and about others such as “may you be free from suffering and may you be at peace” grows our own neural capacity for compassion. Examples of the areas of the brain that are affected are the Right Hemisphere Dorsolateral Cortex and the Medial Prefrontal Cortex.

The life tools that you are learning, outline ways that you can for example, help people in need of care and support and also 'difficult' people to grow beyond the hurtful, harmful ways they behave. Sometimes however, the very best we can do is damage control with an open heart. To be able to optimally make this vital

discernment, we must keep our 'upper' thinking brain online when we are with them and when we are reflecting on what to do. Remember anger and fear experienced only semi-consciously forces your IQ into 'single digits'.

The following exercise can help you to grow and develop to be significantly more unconditionally caring, kind and compassionate. It will also help you to more effectively communicate during times of conscious compassionate conflict. Simultaneously you will be training yourself to be authentically compassionate without needing to typically feel it.

## **U,B-FIT Mindful Compassion and Emotional Self-Regulation Training**

**Step 1:** Complete 10 minutes of *U,B-FIT* (Body Sensations, Feelings and Image or Talk Thinking).

**Step 2:** Next, in your mind's eye visualize yourself in a familiar room sitting across from someone who is a friend or a loved one.

- Look at them and become aware of being here, now.
- Start *U,B-FIT* choice-less awareness.
- Reflect with gratitude on their love and presence in your life.
- Say to them "may you be free from suffering and may you be at peace".

**Step 3:** Now visualize that person leaving and being replaced by someone who needs your help, perhaps someone who is sick or disabled. Don't pre-select anyone; just be with whoever shows up.

- Look at them and become aware of being here, now.
- Intend their healing and well-being. Image/see them well.
- Say to them "may you be free from suffering and may you be at peace".

**Step 4:** Now visualize that person leaving and being replaced by someone with whom at times you can become upset, impatient or angry. Perhaps someone who does not respect you, has hurt you or even betrayed you. Again, don't pre-select anyone; just be with whoever shows up. Now 'as best you can' move through the four steps of the following CCS process.

- **Catch**

- Look at them and become aware of being here, now.
- Label whatever feelings are being experienced, e.g. "There is \_\_\_\_\_".

- **Calm**

- Start *U,B-FIT* body awareness and ahh-llowing if a body sensation has been activated. Be aware of and label the location, the shape, and intensity, e.g. "stronger," or "weaker" or "same".
- Start a bilateral, bio-meridian awareness-based calming strategy such as the butterfly hug or collar bone stimulation.
- Start choice-less awareness and ahh-llowing of all of *U,B-FIT*.

- **Clarify**

- "I objectively clarify what my and their emotional states are".

- **Connect**

- Intend well-being for you and them, e.g. "may you be free from suffering and may you be at peace".
- "I choose action that is useful, kind, ethical and timely".
- If image or talk is activated, label and ahh-llow.

**Step 5:** Now visualize that person leaving and being replaced by a five-year-old child whom you welcome. Intend this child's well-being. Now realize that this is the person to whom you were just connecting: continue to intend their well-being and a happy fulfilling life, e.g. "may you be free from suffering" and "may you be at peace".

**Step 6:** Now say good-bye and return to an awareness of:

- being here, now;
- *U,B-FIT* choice-less awareness;
- gratitude;
- intentions for yourself to be the best you can be and – “may I be free from suffering”;
- intentions for you to help other people you meet to be the best they can be – e.g. “may they be free from suffering”.

Please, please do the exercise we just outlined. Maybe for a while do it weekly. Then apply this new skill as soon as possible when you meet someone who needs your help or when you are confronted with a person who is for you very difficult to be with. If you do, there is nothing else we will need to say. You will know the power of this new skill for yourself. You will, indeed, be able to be relatively more ‘OK’ in the most difficult situations.

Reference - [www.centreforconsciouscare.ca-resources-mindfulness-compassion practice](http://www.centreforconsciouscare.ca-resources-mindfulness-compassion-practice).

### **Summary – examples of other research**

1. Mindful compassion trained subjects demonstrated significantly higher levels of compassion toward strangers than the control groups.
2. *fMRI* shows growth in the parts of the brain involved in empathy, understanding others and emotional regulation, i.e. inferior parietal cortex.
3. Compassion training also increased activity in the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex and the extent to which it communicates with the part of the brain responsible for emotional regulation and positive associations.

*Reference, Enhancing Compassion: A Randomized Controlled Trial of A Compassion Cultivation Training Program – Department of Psychology Stanford University.*

4. Practicing mindfulness activates the prefrontal cortex, and anterior cingulate cortex, and interior insula (Chiesa and Serretti, 2010, Areas that are Part of a Co-Network Activated During Empathy) (Fan, Duncan, de Greck, and Northoff, 2011; Masten, Morelli, and Eisenberger, 2011). Collectively these studies provide empirical evidence for the link between mindfulness and empathy.