

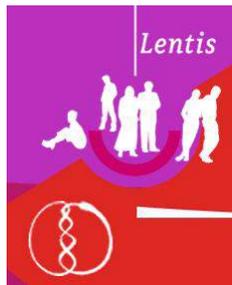


Empathy and
Compassion in Society

Mindfulness-Based Compassionate Living

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Possible mechanisms mindfulness

(Hölzel, Lazar, Gard, Schuman-Olivier, Vago & Ott, 2011, *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 6: 537-559)

Mechanism	Exemplary instructions	Self-reported & experimental behavioral findings	Associated brain areas
Attention regulation	Sustaining attention on the chosen object; whenever distracted, returning attention to the object	Enhanced performance: executive attention (Attention Network Test and Stroop interference), orienting, alerting, diminished attentional blink effect	Anterior cingulate cortex
Body awareness interoception	Focus is usually an object of internal experience: sensory experiences of breathing, emotions, or other body sensations	Increased scores on the Observe subscale of the Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire; narrative self-reports of enhanced body awareness	Insula, temporo-parietal junction
Emotion regulation	Approaching ongoing emotional reactions in a different way (nonjudgmentally, with acceptance)	Increases in positive reappraisal (Cognitive Emotion Regulation Questionnaire)	(Dorsal) prefrontal cortex (PFC)
Exposure	Exposing oneself to whatever is present in the field of awareness; letting oneself be affected by it; refraining from internal reactivity	Increases in non-reactivity to inner experiences (Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire)	Ventro-medial PFC, amygdala
Change in perspective Self-compassion	Detachment from identification with a static sense of self	Self-reported changes in self-concept (Tennessee Self-Concept Scale, Temperament and Character Inventory)	Medial PFC, posterior cingulate cortex, insula, temporo-parietal junction

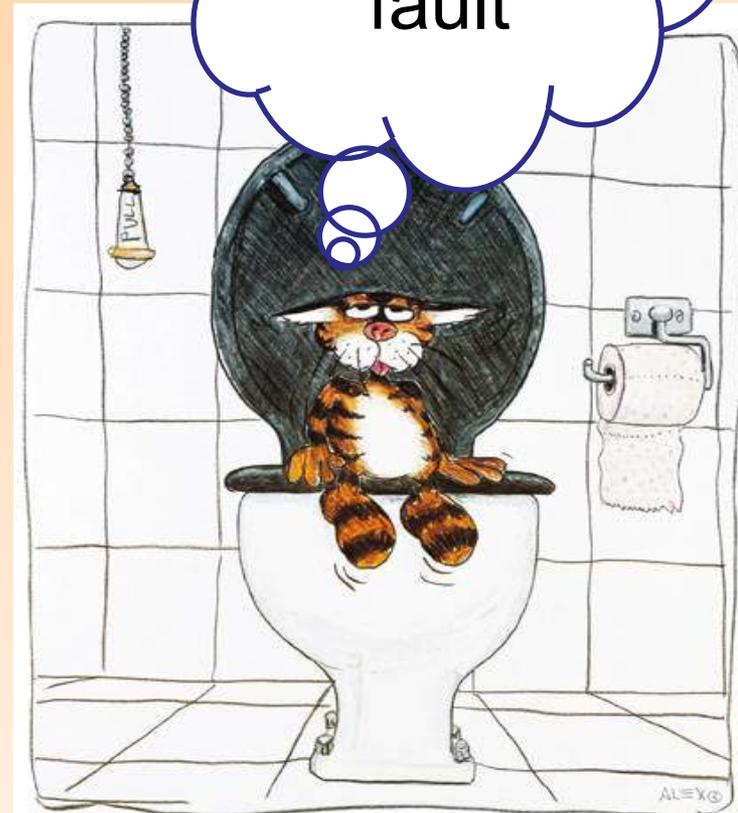
From implicit to explicit: Mindfulness-Based Compassionate Living (MBCL)

Van den Brink & Koster 2012

- Follow up training after MBSR/MBCT/Breathworks.
- Deepening mindfulness with heartfulness.
- Richness of eastern (Buddhist) and western psychology; secular (non-religious) training.
- 8 sessions of 150 min; weekly or every other week.
- One additional silent practice session (150 min).
- Suggestions for practice at home (no homework):
± 1 hour daily.
- 12-14 participants.

Being human is not always

And it's
all my
fault



SHIT HAPPENS

Being human is not always easy...

- With a brain, body and emotions and a socially developed self, that were not our choice.
- In a life full of tragedies: threat, loss, illness, decay, death.
- A lot of what we experience is neither our design, nor our fault.

Compassion starts with the recognition of this inevitable suffering.



Still Face Experiment: Dr. Edward Tronick

by umassboston

Link to the video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C8ZTx1AEup4>



What is Compassion?

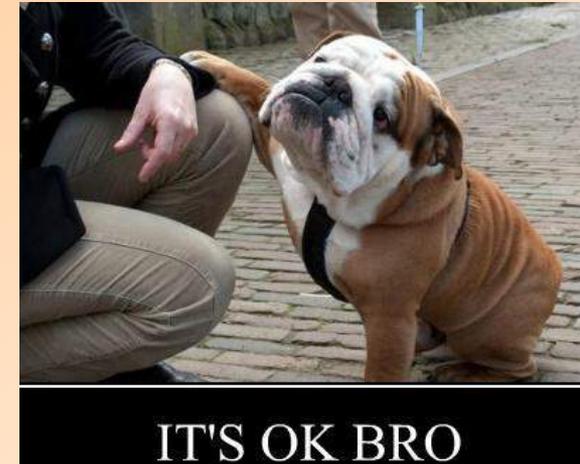
- Compassion is defined as...
 - ‘the capacity to be sensitive to the suffering of ourselves and others and the willingness to relieve and prevent it.’* (Gilbert, 2014)
- A natural human capacity inherent in all of us but often not very well developed.
- The aim of compassion training is to develop and deepen it.
- *‘Contemporary scientific knowledge solidly affirms that kindness and compassion are to the brain what the breath is to life.’* (Daniel Siegel, 2010).

High and low roads to compassion

Goleman 2006

LOW

- Soothing breathing rhythm Gilbert 2010
- Compassionate touch
- Tapping Van der Kolk, 2014
- Vagal tone (HR Variability) Porges 2007; Kok & Fredrickson 2010
- Oxytocin Olf et al. 2013



HIGH

- Mindfulness and loving kindness practice
- Compassionate imagery and skills training
- High and low roads reinforce each other in an upward spiral Kok et al. 2013

The evolved brain

MacLean 1990, Siegel 2007

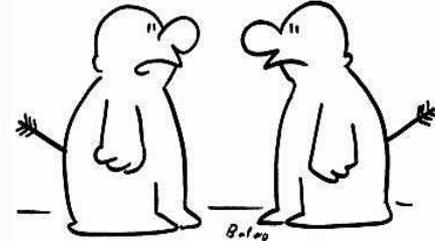
The design is not perfect and also not our fault



MINDFUL BRAIN
Awareness,
insight

NEW BRAIN - THINKING

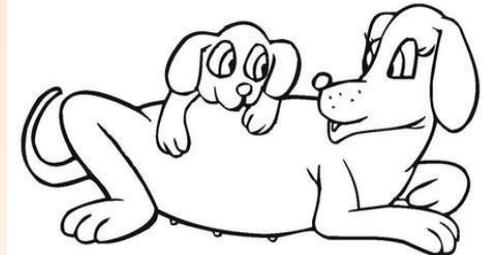
Language, imagery, looking forward & backward, fantasizing, ruminating, organizing, integrating, identity, self & other



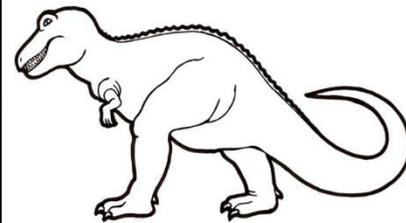
"I know exactly how you feel."

EMOTIONAL BRAIN FEELING

Care, attachment, play, social behavior, rivalry and rank

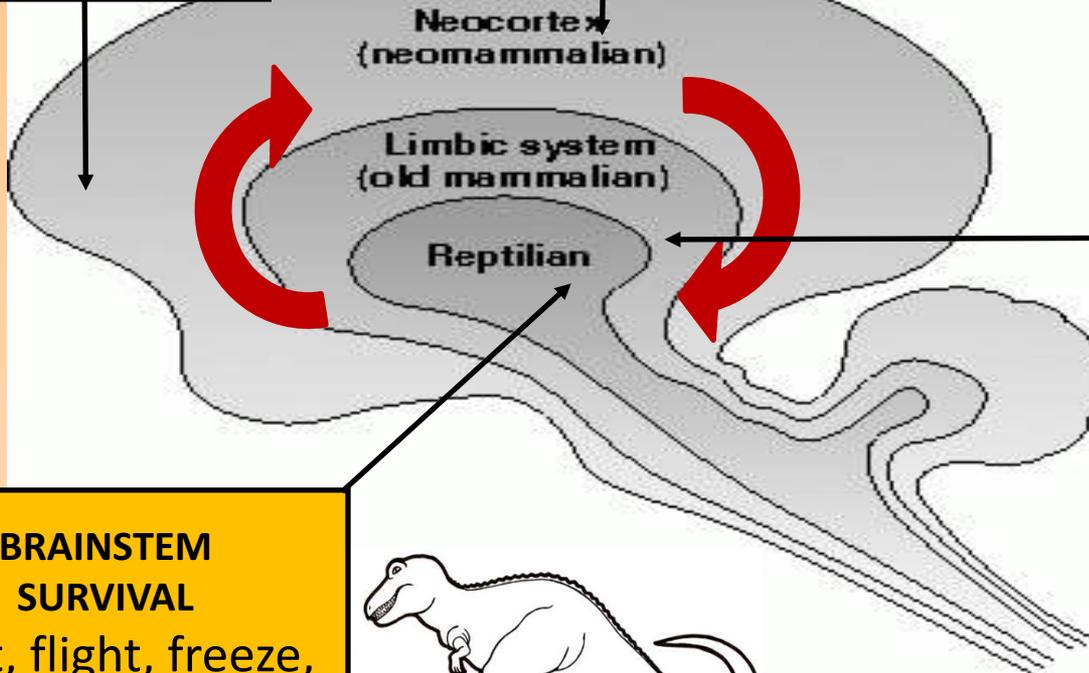


Reptilian

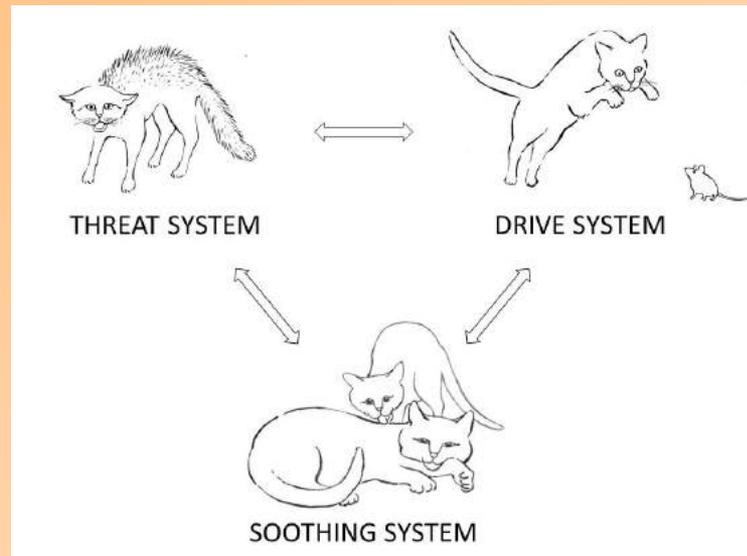


BRAINSTEM SURVIVAL

Fight, flight, freeze,
feed and reproduce



The three emotion regulation systems



General intention:

- Strengthening the soothing system and finding inner resources
- Dealing wisely and compassionately with the threat system and the drive system
- Using mindfulness-based exercises

Using imagery

- *'I've had a lot of worries in my life, most of which never happened.'* (Mark Twain)
- Imagining problems is using the power of imagination in an automatic way
- The soothing system can be strengthened using imagery.
- *Neurons that fire together, wire together.* (Hebb 1949)
- *Best Possible Self (BPS)*

Exercises:

- A safe place (session 1)
- A compassionate companion (session 2)
- Embodying compassion (session 4)
- Metaphor: the horse whisperer (silent session)
- Metaphor: the stream of awareness (session 8)

MBCL-exercises

Wisely and compassionately dealing with difficult issues:

- Compassionately dealing with resistance (session 2)
- Compassionately dealing with desire (session 3)
- Compassionately dealing with inner patterns (session 3)
- Writing a compassionate letter (session 5)
- Forgivingness (session 6):
 - Forgivingness to oneself
 - Asking forgiveness
 - Forgiving others.

*N.B. Inviting to choose issues that are manageable
(not too heavy)!*

Recognising INNER PATTERNS or SCHEMAS

Germer, 2009; Young et al. 2003

Mr. Outcast

Mommy's Child

Everyone-
Abandons-Me

Mrs/Mr

Bottling up

Attention Freak

Not-Good-Enough

Short Fuse

Adaptor

Centre-of-the-
Universe

Misfortune Teller

Loser

Ugly Duckling

Little

Pessimist

Mrs/Mr

Suspicious

Prosecutor

Mrs/Mr

Helpaholic

Control Freak

Helpless

Loner

Mindful noting and naming liberates from over-identification.

Practising self-compassion heals associated pain.

If you cannot change your patterns...

Mr. Outcast

**Mommy's
child**

**Everyone-
Abandons-Me**

**Mrs/Mr
Bottling up**

Short-fuse

Attention Freak

**Not-Good-
Enough**

Adaptor

**Centre-of-the-
Universe**

**Misfortune
Teller**

Loser

Ugly Duckling

**Little
Prosecutor**

Pessimist

**Mrs/Mr
Suspicious**

Helpaholic

**Mrs/Mr
Helpless**

Loner

Control Freak

... perhaps you can change your relationship with them.

SUGGESTIONS FOR HOME PRACTICE

FORMAL

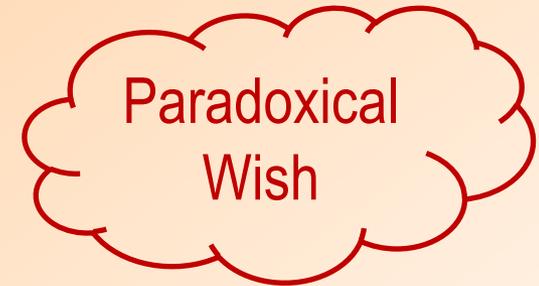
- nourishing the soothing system, e.g. soothing breathing rhythm
- kindness meditation - self & others (*metta light*)
- compassionate breathing - self & others (*tonglen light*)
- safe place / compassionate companion / compassion mode
- compassionately dealing with resistance / desire / inner patterns
- compassionate letter writing / forgiveness
- taking in the good / equanimity

INFORMAL breathing spaces with kindness and compassion;
self-compassion mantra; calendar exercises

Loving-kindness practice (*Metta light*)

In breath: *May I / you / we / all...*

Out breath: ❖ *feel safe...*
❖ *feel healthy...*
❖ *feel happy...*
❖ *feel at ease...*



Self... Benefactor... Dear person... Neutral
person... Difficult person... Groups... All beings...

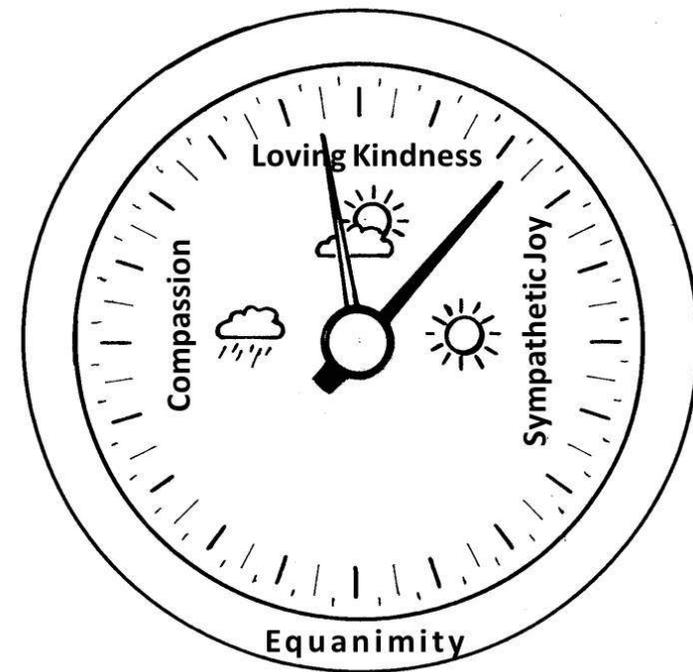
ALTERNATIVE:

Compassionate breathing (*Tonglen light*)

Four Friends for Life

‘Four illimitables (*Brahmaviharas*):

- Not limited by ego-perspective
- Do not exclude anyone
- Can be practised without limit.
 - ❖ Compassion
 - ❖ Loving kindness
 - ❖ Sympathetic joy
 - ❖ Equanimity



May the blossom of compassion grow

In the fertile earth of kindness.

Sprinkled by the fresh water of sympathetic joy.

In the cool shade of equanimity (Tibetan saying)

What contributes to happiness?

POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY

- The Pleasant Life: experiencing pleasant emotions and sensory joy.
- The Engaged Life: connecting with own strengths, experience flow and nurturing relationships.
- The Meaningful Life: commitment to core values and a larger purpose in life.



Psycho-education

Psycho-education brings understanding and (self)compassion (the design is not are fault).

Examples:

- The triune brain
- The three emotion regulation or motivational systems
- Neuroception (Stephen Porges)
- The difference between empathy and compassion
- Love 2.0: A micromoment of positivity resonance (Barbara Fredrickson)
- Shame, guilt, the inner critic
- The lotus of compassion
- Difference between instinctive 'low route' and 'high route' compassion.
- *Tend & Befriend*



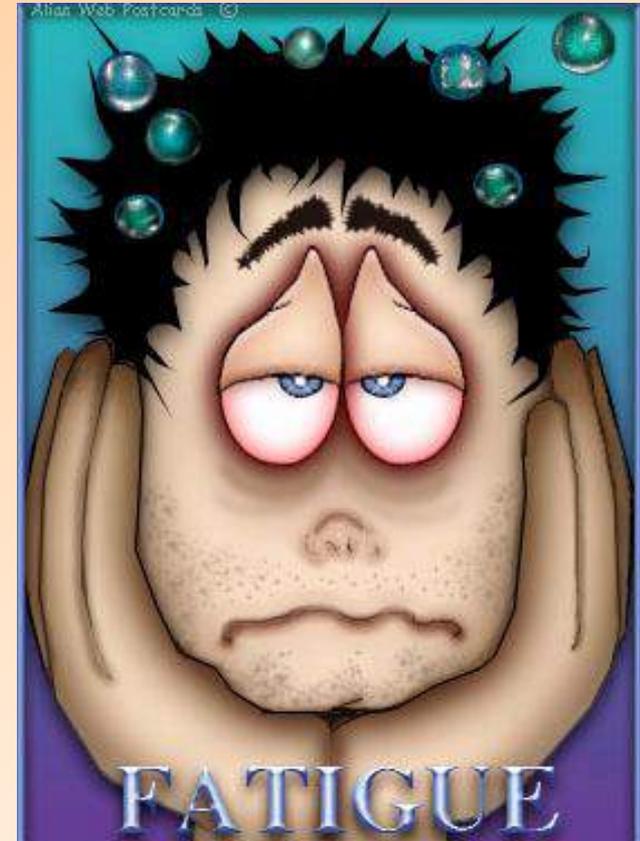
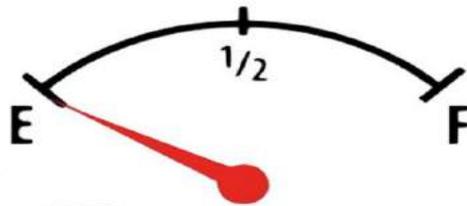
Instinctive (low route) compassion *(tend & befriend)*

Link to the video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cPFXW58dwnw>



When we suffer from the suffering of others

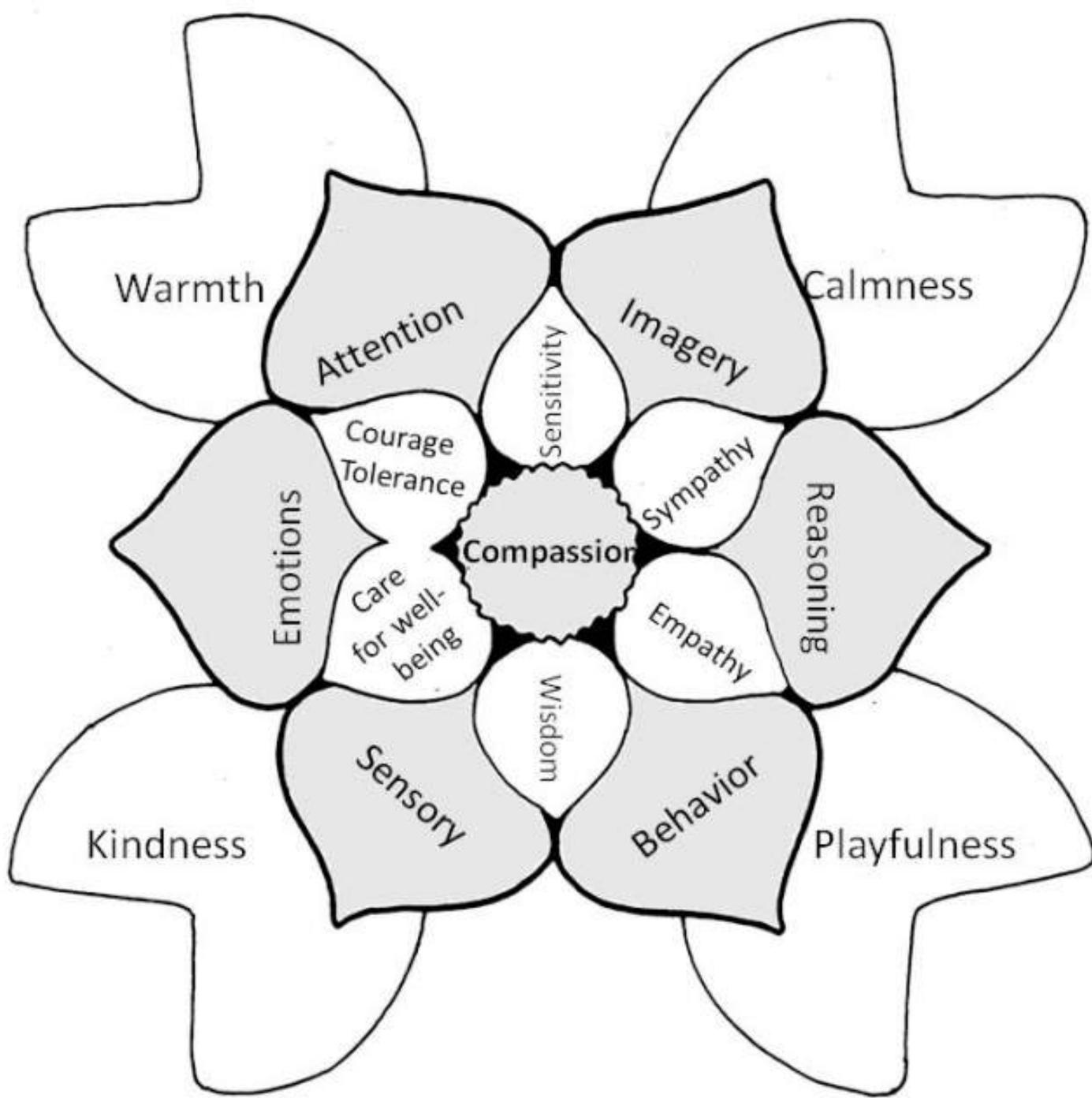
Compassion Fatigue



*Compassion-fatigue should be called
Empathy-fatigue.*

Matthieu Ricard 2013

THE LOTUS OF



COMPASSION

Backdraft

difficulties during the practice

Germer 2009



- Particularly in persons with *insecure attachment/ trauma/ neglect*, practising kindness may trigger the threat system rather than calming it.
- Also in persons with a stable background old pain and ‘The Ocean of Life Sorrow’ can become more clear.
- In guiding:
 - ‘Normalising’
 - Reactions during the practice should go first as an abiding for mindfulness and compassion.
 - Common humanity by sharing in the group.

Inquiry



Sharing about the exercises and the practice at home:

- *To name is to tame*
- Inviting participants to become aware what goes on and to connect with inner wisdom
- Mirroring, sometimes clarifying unhelpful convictions
- In a group: common humanity

‘This requires the instructor to sharpen his/her ability to listen closely, allow space, refrain from the impulse to give advice, and instead, to inquire directly into the actuality of the participant’s experience.’

Practical ethics

- Training in compassion enhances ethical sensitivity
- What are the consequences of our thoughts, speech and behaviour?
- Practical ethics focus on *as much wholesome and as little unwholesome effect as possible, for as many people (beings) involved as possible.*
- Ethical decisions come from the compassionate mind (not from the Threat or Drive System).

‘Our greatest glory is not in never falling but in rising every time we fall.’ (Confucius)

No mud... no lotus



MBCL Activities

Experiential Foundation Course:

- Fri 26 – Su 28 May 2017 (Oslo)
- Mo 12 – We 14 June 2017 (Ireland)
- Sa 28 – Mo 30 Oct 2017 (Oslo)

MBCL Teacher Training:

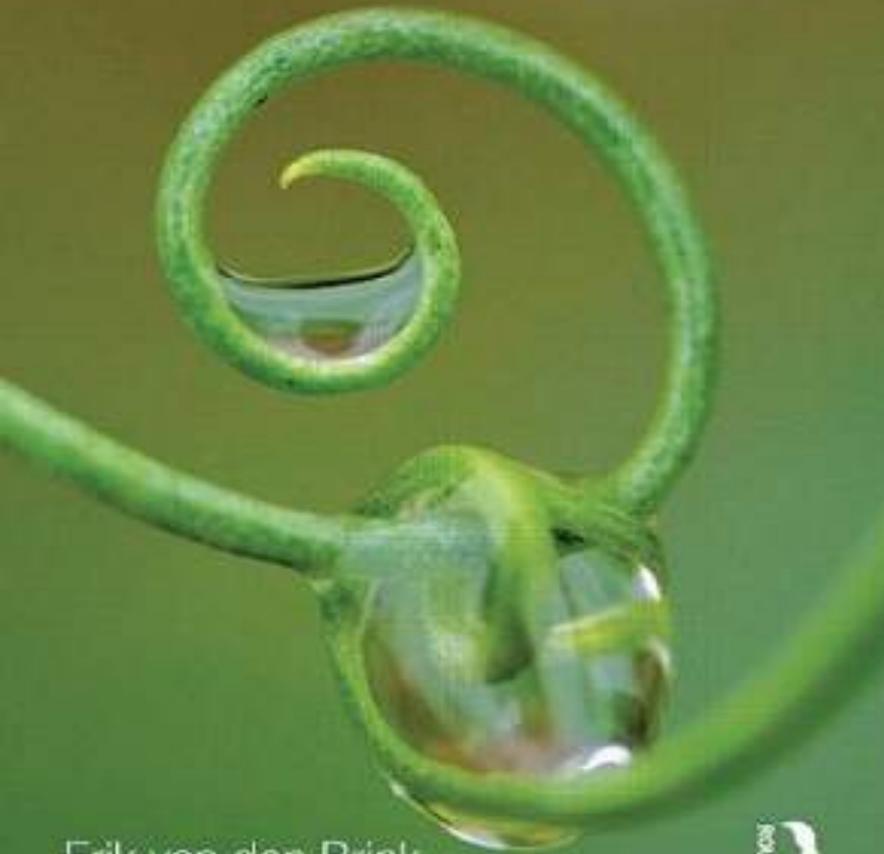
- Mo 7 – Su 13 May 2018



www.institute-for-mindfulness.org/

Mindfulness-Based Compassionate Living

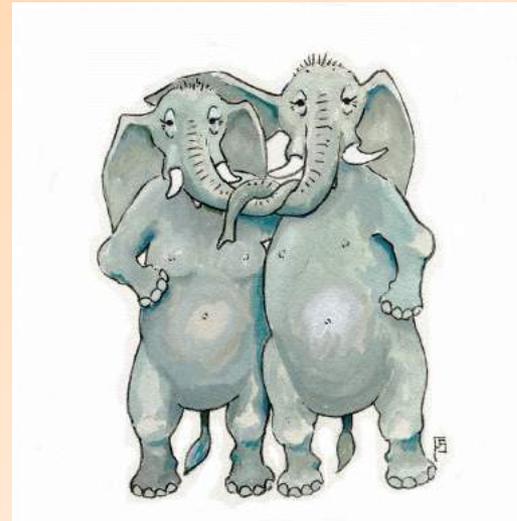
A new training programme to deepen
mindfulness with heartfulness



Erik van den Brink
and Frits Koster



*With gratitude for
your attention and
... compassion*



www.mbcl.org

www.compassionateliving.info