

# CULTIVATING COMPASSION

# Syllabus



# COURSE PURPOSE

Cultivating our existing compassion for ourselves and others empowers us to make a meaningful difference that improves our health, happiness, relationships, work, and society when we are faced with the suffering of others. Acting compassionately is contagious; therefore, our acts of compassion benefit not only those we are in direct contact with, but also can start a chain reaction.

In this course, we will take an interactive approach to:

- **understanding the nature and benefits of compassion**
- **practicing ways to cultivate compassion**
- **continue acting compassionate even in challenging situations**





# LEARNING OUTCOMES

## **Mindful engagement in this course prepares students to:**

- Define the components of compassion

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- Identify differences and similarities between compassion and related concepts such as empathy, sympathy, and kindness

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- Describe the nature and development of compassion

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- Gain experience with practices that increase compassion for ourselves and others

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- Explore benefits of compassion for individuals, relationships, and society

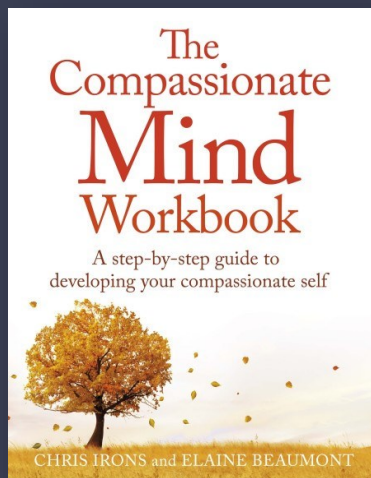
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- Examine how to sustain compassion in challenging situations

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- Act in compassionate ways in your everyday life

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# REQUIRED TEXTBOOK



Irons, C. & Beaumont, E. (2017). *The compassionate mind workbook: A step-by-step guide to developing your compassionate self*. London, England: Robinson.



# COURSE FORMAT

This course will be interactive in nature. Most class sessions will include a relatively short lecture, but a significant portion of each class will be devoted to activities and discussions that are designed to increase understanding of compassion and assist in the cultivation of compassion. Learning is facilitated when students actively engage with and process course materials and concepts while collaborating with others. Accordingly, we will establish a learning community in which we are all responsible to one another for discussing, reflecting, and making meaning of course content.



A background image showing four diverse students (two men and two women) walking towards the camera in a brightly lit, arched hallway. They are all smiling and carrying backpacks or books. Overlaid on this image is a light blue rounded rectangular box containing the title.

# GRADED COURSEWORK

## **In-Class Activities (30% of course grade)**

During our class meetings, we will explore various forms of mindfulness and meditation practices and hands-on learning activities related to compassion cultivation.

## **Compassion/Mindfulness Journal (20% of course grade)**

You will keep a journal in which you will write about acts of compassion and your experience with mindfulness practices. Intentionally making an effort to notice and practice the flows of compassion by integrating them into our everyday lives can assist us in cultivating our compassion. Similarly, incorporating mindfulness practices into our daily routine can strengthen our ability to live mindfully and to act compassionately.

## **Midterm and Final Reflections (10% of course grade)**

Twice during this course, you will write a reflection paper in which you explore your experiences, thoughts, feelings, and reactions to the content and activities for this course. These reflection papers will give you the opportunity to make connections with course content and consider what impact this course is having for you.

## **Intentional Act of Compassion (10% of course grade)**

For this assignment, you will identify suffering that you feel motivated to act compassionately to try to alleviate. Your intentional act of compassion will differ from most or all of the compassion acts that you write about in your compassion journal because it will require some level of planning rather than being spontaneous. You are welcome to complete this assignment individually or can collaborate and complete this in a group with other classmates. At the end of the course, these Intentional Acts of Compassion will be shared in class during short informal class presentations.

## **Knowledge Checks (30% of course grade)**

Throughout the course, you will complete knowledge checks to demonstrate your mastery of the main ideas presented in class lectures, activities, readings, and videos. The knowledge checks will be composed of multiple-choice questions.



# CULTIVATING COMPASSION- CLASS SCHEDULE

Week	Topic	Readings	Graded Coursework
1	Course Introduction	None	
2	We have tricky brains	Intro & Ch. 1	
	We are shaped by our experiences	Ch. 2	
3	Understanding our emotions	Ch. 3	Knowledge Check 1
	Understanding how and why our difficulties arise	Ch. 4	
4	What is compassion?	Ch. 5	
	What is compassion?	Ch. 5	
5	The flows of compassion	Ch. 6	Journal 1 Knowledge Check 2
	Why compassion can be difficult	Ch. 7	
6	Attention and mindfulness	Ch. 8	Journal 2
	Cultivating the soothing system I	Ch. 9	
7	Cultivating the soothing system II	Ch. 10	Journal 3 Knowledge Check 3
	Building the drive system	Ch. 11	
8	Developing our compassionate self	Ch. 12	Journal 4 Midterm Reflection
	Developing our compassionate other	Ch. 13	
9	Developing our compassionate team	Ch. 14	Journal 5 Knowledge Check 4
10	Compassion for others	Ch. 15	Journal 6
	Experiencing compassion from others	Ch. 16	
11	Self-compassion	Ch. 17	Journal 7 Knowledge Check 5
	Observing compassion Benefits of compassion	Additional Readings	



# CULTIVATING COMPASSION- CLASS SCHEDULE

Week	Topic	Readings	Graded Coursework
12	Compassionate attention	Ch. 18	Journal 8
	Compassionate thinking	Ch. 19	
13	Compassionate engagement of emotion	Ch. 20	Journal 9
	Compassionate behavior	Ch. 21 Ch. 22	Knowledge Check 6
14	Compassion fatigue and self-care	Ch. 23	Journal 10
	Understanding & building compassion to our multiple selves		
15	Bringing our compassionate mind to shame and criticism	Ch. 24	
16	How to manage fears, blocks, resistance to compassion Presentations of Intentional Act of Compassion	Ch. 25	Intentional Act of Compassion
	Sustaining our compassionate mind Presentations of Intentional Act of Compassion	Ch. 26	Knowledge Check 7 Final Reflection





# CULTIVATING COMPASSION

A photograph of two hands clasped together in a supportive grip, with a teal circular graphic overlay at the top.

Sanford Program for the Advancement of Compassion and Empathy