

Week 2 - Mindfulness and Compassion
Lovingkindness Meditation

Kindness and compassion are at the core of almost every meditative tradition.

Moreover, *self-* kindness may be the most important component of MBSR - it's the oil that makes the gears of mindfulness work. Without it, the practices are at best, dry, and at worst, harsh and counter-productive. *Ironically, although self- compassion may be the most important component of mindfulness, it is almost totally overlooked in many mindfulness programs.*

Videos and Reading

The first video, **The Evolutionary Roots of Compassion**, explores the idea that we, as humans, have a deep-seated inclination to care for others, and the article, **Survival of the Kindest**, indicates that even Darwin believed this. As natural as the capacity for compassion is, Matthieu Ricard, a Buddhist monk who has logged 50,000 hours of meditation practice and who also has a PhD in cellular genetics, makes the case for consciously supporting this capacity in the video, **Cultivating Altruism**.

We also explore compassion in caregiving in **5 Compassionate Practices**, and the natural linkages between mindfulness and compassion in Shauna Shapiro's video, **How Mindfulness Cultivates Compassion**.

In our culture, it can be argued that the person we are least kind to is ourselves, and in **Self-Compassion**, Farida Zaman points out our tendency to be overly critical of ourselves and describes some ways to cultivate a healthy self- compassion. In the video, **Overcoming Objections to Self-Compassion**, and in the article, **The Five Myths of Self- Compassion**, Kristin Neff explores misconceptions about self-compassion, including the belief that motivation requires self-criticism, and the idea that being kinder to ourselves makes us complacent and less effective.

Daily Practices

In keeping with this theme, we introduce the **Lovingkindness Meditation**, which we suggest you try at least once this week. It is a shorter practice (13 min), so when you do this meditation, you can extend it for another 17 minutes to give yourself a full 30 minutes on that day. Or, if you'd like to extend a bit of lovingkindness to yourself(!), you can stop at the end of the 13 minute meditation.

For the **formal practice** this week, you can choose between the Body Scan, and the Lovingkindness meditation.

For the **informal practice**, on any given day, you may choose any of the practices you've experienced so far in Week 1 or this week, and enter your experience on the supplied log.

Videos

The Evolutionary Roots of Compassion by Dacher Keltner [4 min]

Cultivating Altruism by Matthieu Ricard [18 min]

How Mindfulness Cultivates Compassion by Shauna Shapiro [16 min]

Overcoming Objections to Self-Compassion video by Kristin Neff [12 min]

Reading

Survival of the Kindest by Paul Ekman

5 Compassionate Practices by Presence Care Project

Self-Compassion by Farida Zaman

The Five Myths of Self-Compassion by Kristin Neff

Practice sheets

Formal Practice [PDF]

Informal Practice [PDF]



If we could read the secret history of our enemies, we should find in each man's life sorrow and suffering enough to disarm all hostility.

- Henry Longfellow

Hurt people hurt people. That's how pain patterns get passed on, generation after generation after generation.

Break the chain today. Meet anger with sympathy, contempt with compassion, cruelty with kindness. Greet grimaces with smiles. Forgive and forget about finding fault. Love is the weapon of the future.

- Yehuda Berg

To love our neighbors as we love ourselves means also to love ourselves as we love our neighbors. It means to treat ourselves with as much kindness and understanding as we would the person next door who is in trouble.

- Frederick Buechner