Welcome to Compassion Cultivation TrainingTM. CCT is an 8-week course designed to cultivate and strengthen the qualities of compassion, empathy, and kindness for oneself and others. The protocol integrates traditional contemplative practices with contemporary psychology and on-going scientific research on compassion.

This course was developed at Stanford University by a team of contemplative scholars, clinical psychologists, and researchers. More information is available at: http://ccare.stanford.edu/about/mission-vision/

This course will consist of:

1. **Weekly 2-hour classes**: To include informal lecture, discussion, in-class listening and communication exercises with partners and in small groups, and guided meditations.

2. **Weekly Meditation exercises**: Daily meditation, visualization, and breathing practices. Guided meditation recordings will be provided at:
   http://www.collaborativecompassiontraining.com/student-materials/meikas-course-material/
   Alternative recordings: http://ccare.stanford.edu/cctstudents Password: cctaudio

   Please be sure to follow the assigned meditations for your daily practice, per the schedule below.

3. **Weekly Assignments**: Real-time homework to help you practice and cultivate the experience of responding to your daily life

**Summary of Topics, Teachings and Practices:**

Course Materials:
http://collaborativecompassiontraining.com/student-materials/meikas-course-material/
Password: Will be assigned each week.

A daily meditation practice is crucial, as well as the informal practice as assigned each week.

**Week 1: (Step 1)** The first class is an introduction to the course content, instructor and fellow students. In-class discussions will include: What interests and motivates you to practice cultivating compassion through meditation. What intention brought you to the course? What is meditation, compassion and suffering?

   Week 1 Meditation Practice: Settling the Mind & Body.

**Week 2: (Step 2) Loving Kindness and Compassion for a Loved One.** This class is designed to help you recognize what the “experience” of kindness and compassion feel like when they naturally occur within us. These practices help us connect to the mental and physical processes that arise naturally and are key components for the intentional
cultivation of compassion in our hearts and minds. The meditation and accompanying practical exercises are aimed at helping us recognize the physical and psychological feelings of warmth, tenderness, concern and connectedness associated with the “experience” of compassion and loving-kindness, by deliberately evoking our feelings for a loved one.

Week 2 Meditation Practice: Loving-Kindness and Compassion for a Loved One.

**Week 3: (Step 3a) Compassion for Oneself:** In this class, we turn our attention to applying the feelings that characterize compassionate relating -- such as warmth, tenderness, concern and acceptance -- towards oneself. This is a crucial step in the training. When we are able to recognize and connect to our own feelings and needs and nurture the process of relating to them with compassion, it can become a basis for cultivating genuine compassion for others, as well.

The practices that are associated with this step are spread over two weeks. This is because it can be (though isn’t always) difficult or challenging to acknowledge our own needs and feelings and respond to them with compassion and loving-kindness. (Step 3a) Compassion for Oneself focuses on genuine self-care and greater self-acceptance and helps encourage us to develop an internal voice of compassion by cultivating a caring, careful and honest relationship to our direct experience.

Week 3 Meditation Practice: (Step 3a) Compassion & Loving-Kindness for Yourself

**Week 4: Loving-Kindness for Oneself (Step 3b):** This step involves cultivating loving-kindness for ourselves and focuses on experiencing qualities such as heartfelt friendliness, warmth, happiness and the aspiration for our own genuine and future well-being.

Week 4 Meditation Practice: Loving-Kindness and Compassion for yourself (Step 3b)

**Week 5: (Step 4) Recognizing Shared Common Humanity & Developing Appreciation for Others:** Generating genuine compassion for others involves two key elements: 1) recognizing a worldview of our shared and common humanity, and 2) developing appreciation for others. The first step is recognizing the basic sameness of self and others with respect to our shared and fundamental aspiration for happiness and overcoming suffering. Our willingness to imagine ourselves in the shoes of another, to identify with their suffering, is a key component of empathy. This week we investigate what it means to really “see” other people and feel their concerns and issues as no different from our own, except in the details of their personal stories. We will practice contemplating, “Just like me, this person wishes to be happy and healthy and free from suffering.”

Week 5: Meditation Practice: Cultivating Compassion for Others

**Week 6: (Step 5) Widening the Circle of Our Compassion:** In this session we progressively expand the field of our compassion to include multiple categories of beings, and finally to include all beings. Is such compassion just an ideal or is it a real possibility open to all of us?
At each stage of expansion, the meditation involves four crucial parts: 1) visualizing the object of compassion 2) remembering or imagining a scenario of suffering and difficulty experienced by the specific person or people who we’re holding as the object of our compassionate wishes 3) wishing that person or people to be free from suffering, and 4) feeling this as a deep heartfelt wish and fusing it with our minds.

Week 6 Meditation Practice: Cultivating Compassion for Others

Week 7: (Step 6) Active Compassion Practice. In this session we will work with “Giving and Receiving” meditation, which is a powerful technique for cultivating altruistic intention and for making your compassion more embodied and active. It is at the heart of active compassion practice. In this stage of the meditative cultivation of compassion, essentially what we’re doing is reinforcing our desire to help others by preparing our minds and hearts to be ready to altruistically reach out to others in need.

Key points to remember: 1) prime a generous spirit 2) recognize your own enormous capacity to help 3) connect with others, tapping into your motivation to help, and then do something. When you witness or feel suffering, offer the simple kindness of breathing out the light of your own good heart.

Week 7 Meditation Practice: Active Compassion Practice

Week 8: Integrated Daily Compassion Cultivation Practice. In this final session we explore how to integrate and support the habit of responding with compassion to the ongoing ebb & flow of life’s challenges, by merging all of the previous steps into a single meditation practice. The most important thing to remember is to engage and embody these practices. Put simply, we need to do these practices. Talking about them or reading about them, isn’t enough and won’t have the same effect upon our minds/brains or bodies. It is through regular practice that we awaken the heart of compassion and bring it into our lived experience. This is the how we reap the benefits of compassion cultivation and why we can share that transformative experience with others.

Week 8 Meditation Practice: Integrated Daily Compassion Cultivation Meditation

Disclaimer: When we open our hearts to the difficulties, loses, disappointments, and human tragedies that are part and parcel of the experience of being human, we may encounter emotional challenges and obstacles. You will learn skills to work with these in class, but CCT is an educational course and is not meant to treat psychological disorders. If at any time you have serious difficulty, we encourage you to seek competent professional help. The instructor can provide you with referrals to community mental health resources.