Mindful Presence Cultivates a Resilient Mind, Neural Integration & Empathic Relationships

Research suggests that the therapist’s presence is the key factor in effective psychotherapy. Mindful awareness practice is a presence-cultivating training that can be proposed to catalyze integration in the brain and in relationships. In interpersonal neurobiology we view the mind as a self-organizing, emergent process that is both embodied and relational. In this way, presence is both a neural and a relational state, one that integrates energy and information flow within us and between us. A resilient mind arises with presence and permits the most flexible and adaptive states to be achieved over time.

Daniel J. Siegel, M.D.
Executive Director, Mindsight Institute, Clinical Professor of Psychiatry, UCLA School of Medicine, Co-director, UCLA Mindful Awareness Research Center, Author, Mindsight: The New Science of Personal Transformation

An Interpersonal Neurobiological View of Wisdom & Compassion

Studies of wisdom suggest that "wise individuals" are those that focus on the well-being of others and are able to see the broader prospective of how we are all interconnected. Research on compassion reveals that the human brain evolved to be collaborative, for us to care about others' suffering and to make efforts to alleviate their distress. In many ways, wisdom and compassion can be seen to share a fundamental sense of identity that extends the sense of self beyond
the boundary of the skin. Cultivating this larger sense of self through reflective practice can be seen as the pathway to developing wisdom and compassion in our lives.

Daniel J. Siegel, M.D.

1:30-3 p.m. Concurrent Workshops

• **The Seeds of Destiny: Finding Meaning & Compassion**
  Fate and destiny are the two agreements the soul must make and the core issues we struggle with throughout our lives. If a person does not accept and face their fate in life, they may never find their deepest resources, their inner medicine, and their natural gifts. If a person does not risk their destiny, they will never know who they are intended to be in this world. This dynamic presentation offers an exploration of identity and meaning, of purpose and passion, and of wisdom and healing, all leading to a radical understanding of self-compassion.

  Michael Meade, D.H.L.
  Founder, Mosaic Multicultural Foundation; Author, *Fate & Destiny: The Two Agreements of the Soul* and *Why the World Doesn’t End: Tales of Renewal in Times of Loss*

• **Cultivating the Upside to Depression: Discovering Compassion as a Key to a Resilient Brain**
  In this workshop, Elisha Goldstein, PhD will synthesize the psychology, neuroscience and practice of key compassion-focused elements from evidence-based programs such as Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT), Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), Mindful Self-Compassion, Compassion Focused Therapy, and anti-depressant effects of Flow and Mastery. Participants will leave with a key understanding of specific steps to take to help cultivate natural anti-depressants that will move from states to more enduring traits that will lead to resiliency during relapse.

  Elisha Goldstein, Ph.D.
  Psychologist, West Los Angeles, CA; Author, *The Now Effect: How this Moment can Change the Rest of your Life*, and Co-author of *A Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction Workbook*
3:15 – 4:45 p.m.  Concurrent Workshops

• **Paths of Genius & Compassion**
  The original idea of genius refers to the natural spirit and inner qualities of a person; this includes god-given talents as well as the way they are aimed in life. In that sense, everyone has a genius nature and something essential to give to the world. The inner genius is what our “calling” calls forth as it tries to become known throughout our life. Whether young or old our job is to answer the call and risk our unique destiny. Enduring happiness requires that we awaken to the inner spirit that brought us to life in the first place. Following ones genius always involves risk, but the greater risk is to live a life not aligned with one’s inborn spirit.
  
  **Michael Meade, D.H.L.**

• **Breaking Bad Habits: The Neuroscience & Psychology of Personal Transformation**
  In this workshop, Elisha Goldstein, Ph.D., will explore the neuroscience and psychology behind why we do the things we do that keep us stuck. Participants will be shown how to identify cues that trigger a subconscious habit loop and present specific mindful methods to help us break free from our bad habits and open us up to possibilities and opportunities to develop new healthier habits to take action with, including compassion and self-compassion. This space of clarity and choice is "The Now Effect."
  
  **Elisha Goldstein, Ph.D.**

**Friday, November, 1, 2013**

9-10:30 a.m.

**This is Your Brain on Compassion**

This workshop will present a componential view of compassion, followed by an overview of the neural circuits, systems and pathways most involved in each process that contributes to compassion. Working chronologically, we’ll consider how ‘mirror neurons’ and ‘shared circuits, the prefrontal cortex, oxytocin rich midbrain care/nurturance circuitry, the temporal parietal junction and dopaminergic reward systems support feelings of compassion and motivate the altruistic behaviors that are often motivated by compassion. We’ll color sketches of these brain systems. Finally, we’ll examine how boosting one’s
compassion, thereby exercising and strengthening the neural systems that support the processed that give rise to compassion, leads to better health, well-being, and interpersonal functioning.

**Emiliana Simon-Thomas, Ph.D.**

Researches pro-social emotions like compassion, gratitude, awe and love of humanity. Science Director, Greater Good Science Center, University of California, Berkeley.

10:45-12:15 p.m. **Self-Compassion & Coping with the Stress of Life**

A broad overview of the growing body of self-compassion research will be given which demonstrates that self-compassion is crucial for coping with stressful life events such as divorce or other traumatic experiences. It will introduce key practices designed to help deal with stress, including the stress entailed in caregiver roles. Finally, meditation practices will be introduced that are designed to help calm and soothe ourselves when feeling overwhelmed with the big challenges of life.

**Kristin Neff, Ph.D.**

Pioneer in the field of self-compassion research. Associate Professor, Educational Psychology Department, University of Texas, Austin

1:30-3 p.m. **Concurrent Workshops**

- **Self-Compassion & Healthy Body Image**

  This workshop will consider the link between self-compassion and body image. For women especially, it’s hard to feel good about ourselves in a culture that worships the thin ideal of beauty. Research will be presented that demonstrates the strong link between self-compassion and healthy body image, including a recent self-compassion intervention that successfully improved body image among women. Techniques will be learned to help us maintain our motivation to be healthy without striving to look perfect. Finally, meditation practices will be introduced that help us learn to accept and cherish our bodies rather than constantly judge ourselves as inadequate.

  **Kristin Neff, Ph.D.**
• *Quieting the Hungry Ghost: Mindful & Compassionate Relapse Prevention*
  This workshop explores some ways that mindfulness can help prevent relapse, and to also help in overcoming the “shame” of relapse when it occurs. Whatever your hungry ghost, mindfulness can help quiet it. An important element of this workshop is to have therapists share how they are using mindfulness in their professional and personal lives. Time will be integrated into the schedule to allow for small group interaction.
  
  Richard Fields, Ph.D.

  3:15-4:45 p.m.

*Dispelling the Myth of Compassion Fatigue*
  This presentation will begin by exploring the definitions of compassion, empathy, fatigue and 'burnout'. With these, we will establish a common conceptual framework for thinking about where these constructs overlap, and what about them is distinct. Next, we will review evidence from neuroscience and psychology that aligns with these definitions, and justifies several key claims: 1) runaway empathy may be a factor in burnout, 2) certain assumptions about ourselves and other people can derail compassion, 3) compassion is fundamentally indefatigable and 4) strengthening one’s compassion builds resilience against burnout. The presentation will finish with some simple, accessible principles for boosting compassion in oneself, as well as in community or workplace settings.

  Emiliana Simon-Thomas, Ph.D.

  Saturday, November 2, 2013

  9-10:30 a.m.

*Ways to Nurture Compassion and Bolster Resilience: A Constructive Narrative Approach*
  This presentation begins with a consideration of what distinguishes resilient individuals versus those who evidence persistent PTSD and related adjustment difficulties and the role that compassion plays in the resilience recovery process. A variety of specific psychotherapeutic interventions designed to bolster positive emotions will be considered. For example, these include psychoeducation, meditation, mindfulness, forgiveness, spirituality and cognitive restructuring.

  Donald Meichenbaum, Ph.D.
Professor Emeritus, University of Waterloo, Ontario; Canada

10:45-12:15 p.m.  
**Mindfulness, Compassion & the Pain Paradox**  
Being a psychotherapist means regular exposure to people undergoing painful emotions and describing upsetting things. Witnessing pain of this magnitude can generate unwanted feelings in the therapist and threaten basic, protective assumptions about the world. The client’s experiences may bring home the inevitability of future suffering in the therapist’s own life. Luckily, phenomena especially helpful in working with clients – mindfulness and compassion -- can lessen vicarious traumatization and countertransference, and increase enjoyment and growth in the work.  

**John Briere, Ph.D.**  
Associate Professor of Psychiatry and Psychology; Director, Trauma Program, USC; Author, Author, *Principles of Trauma Therapy*, 2nd edition.

1:30-3 p.m. **Concurrent Workshops**  
- **Two Waves, One Ocean: Mindfulness & Compassion**  
Based on Dr. Shapiro’s text, *The Art and Science of Mindfulness: Integrating Mindfulness into Psychotherapy and the Helping Professions*, the workshop offers a deeper understanding of the interrelationship between mindfulness and compassion, offering a nuanced definition of Mindfulness, which includes compassion as a central element. The workshop offers scientific research and meditative practices for therapists interested in awakening the mind and opening the heart. Drawing on current research in psychology, medicine and cognitive neuroscience, we will investigate the effects of mindfulness meditation on decreasing pathology and increasing positive psychological and physiological states. Further, we will explore the mechanisms of action through which mindfulness meditation has its transformation effects, specifically focusing on how mindfulness can cultivate compassion.  

**Shauna Shapiro, Ph.D.**
Associate Professor of Counseling Psychology, Santa Clara University, Santa Clara, CA.; Co-Author, The Art & Science of Mindfulness

- **Compassion and Decision Making: Implications for Conflict Resolution**
  This presentation considers the nature of decision-making processes and the type of mindset, mental habits (cognitive errors) that undermine conflict resolution. The role that compassion can play in the decision-making process will be discussed and ways to improve decision-making processes will be considered.
  
  **Donald Meichenbaum, Ph.D. (description due)**

3:15-4:45 p.m. **Concurrent Workshops**

- **Cultivating Compassion**
  This workshop will delve into the potential ways of cultivating compassion for others and ourselves. Through didactic presentation, meditation practices, clinical case examples, and small group activities we will explore specific pathways of cultivating compassion personally and professionally to cultivate greater health, well being and freedom.
  
  **Shauna Shapiro, Ph.D.**

- **Mindfulness, Compassion Suffering & the Therapist**
  Although our culture is highly invested in avoiding “negative” experience, Buddhist and Western psychologies agree that avoiding emotional pain leads to long-term suffering, whereas directly engaging pain ultimately reduces it. From this perspective, ongoing trauma-related anxiety, sadness, even intrusive memories are not “bad” -- in fact, they represent access to experiences that can be cognitively, emotionally, and existentially processed. Critical in supporting the client's experience of this paradox is the therapist's compassionate capacity to allow and tolerate pain in this process.
  
  **John Briere, Ph.D.**