COMPASSION WORK FOR ARMED FORCES CHAPLAINS

AN INSTRUCTION MANUAL

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This work is dedicated to my wife Gabriela.

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Contents

Instructions for Use

This program was designed for use by chaplains in the Armed Forces, but can be adapted for many other uses. The rationale for having chaplains present this information is that in the Armed Forces, servicemembers will almost always have access to a chaplain in their battalion. The chaplain's job is to help servicemembers in a pastoral manner with the difficulties they face. These modules are intended to help provide a learning experience for servicemembers to cultivate compassion.

The three modules are organized as follows: **What is Compassion**, **Compassion for Me**, and **Compassion for Others**. Each module has been designed to last an hour or up to an hour and a half. Each module will have suggestions for the amount of time to spend on each section of discussion and activity. However, the modules can be adapted to the needs of the chaplain. If material needs to be cut for sake of time constraints the chaplain may use their discretion to decide what to cut. I suggest avoiding teaching all three modules in one day as it is a lot of material to cover and the point of the modules is to integrate the practices of each module in one's life before moving on to the next module. Thus, holding one module each week for three weeks with the same attendees is intended. However, if the chaplain wants to change the order or simply use one or two of the classes rather than the whole program, they can do so, but will need to modify the materials.

The main intent for these modules is to help servicemembers to develop their understanding of compassion, their ability to have compassion for themselves in difficult circumstances, and their capacity to remain in a compassionate mindset when surrounded by others. In developing this understanding, it is hoped that it will help to mitigate further suffering in the lives of the servicemembers.

The language of these modules will be geared toward

servicemembers in garrison. Each module will have brief suggestions to adapt for meetings held during a deployment, post-deployment reintegration, and possible future classes the chaplain could develop themselves. There will be no slides for these modules because the intent of the class is to hold discussions to help all the attendees be involved, active, and attentive to the subjects being discussed. Involvement from those in attendance should be stressed at the beginning of each module or upon invitation to attend. To maintain control of the discussion and sharing ideas, the modules are meant to be done with small groups of around 10 attendees plus the chaplain. Multiple groups can be held during different times in order to help increase the amount of people attending. Again, the chaplain can adapt these modules to fit their needs.

These modules should be done in groups since groupwork can be useful in showing one how to have compassion. Rather than simply learning principles; groups can put those principles into action to provide muscle memory to those who are struggling or may struggle in the future. In this way, a group session that focuses on compassion for self, rather than the symptoms of self-hate or self- defeating behaviors such as habits, addictions, or harmful mentalities, can mitigate such common life-problems and difficulties in the future and provide mechanisms for coping.

Possible Uses

These classes can be used on marriage retreats centered around increasing compassion in one's marriage. They can be used on base to help units which are having a difficult time working together. They can be used for a hand-picked group of individuals which the chaplain feels could benefit from compassion work. These individuals may be those who have expressed problems with perfectionism, anxiety, or mild depression. If a group cannot be created, the modules can be adapted for one-on-one discussions and exercises between the

chaplain and the person seeking help. There may be times when an individual will feel more comfortable doing the exercises and learning about compassion alone with the chaplain rather than in a group.

For instructors who would like to learn more about the subjects covered in these modules and to best prepare for discussions, a **Supporting Research** section has been included in this book that covers some of the important information regarding compassion work as well as some suggestions for discussion. These modules are intended to be a very basic course of introduction to the ideas of compassion work. For further study by instructors and attendees is see sources cited in the bibliography.

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Supporting Research

Exploration of Compassion

"Only the development of compassion and understanding for others bring us the tranquility and happiness we all seek."

Dalai Lama XIV

A key to understanding humanity and the suffering that we undergo is understanding the human brain. The human brain is unlike the brain of any other living organism studied to date. A defining difference between the *homo sapiens* and any other species is the complexity of the brain and its cognition: humans are able to revisit, reexamine, and analyze past experiences as well as create and analyze multiple future scenarios. This complexity has both advantages and disadvantages.[1]

For example, imagine a zebra in the savannah which happens upon an oasis with a large, cool watering hole. The zebra meanders over to the water and begins to drink long draughts of water to cool off from the heat. Unbeknownst to the zebra, a lion hides in the bushes nearby. This lion has been waiting all day for an unsuspecting animal to place themselves at the bank of the watering hole. The lion is preparing for its next meal as it rears to sprint towards the zebra.

As soon as the lion breaks from its bushy cover, the zebra is alerted by the noise, looks up and begins to run in the opposite direction. The lion doubles its efforts to catch the zebra, but the zebra is able to get away after having replenished its energy at the side of the watering hole. The zebra's adrenaline is at an all-time high, and so it was able

1. Paul Gilbert and Pema Choden, *Mindful Compassion: How the Science of Compassion Can Help You Understand Your Emotions, Live in the Present, and Connect Deeply with Others* (Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications, Inc., 2014), 41.

to muster all of its strength to get away.

Minutes after the zebra breaks away from the threat of the lion its heartrate has decreased dramatically, the chemicals coursing through its brain and muscles have settled, and the zebra again turns its attention to replenishing its energies with the search for food and water. The zebra does not continue to think about the lion, though it remains attentive for other potential threats in the desert.

Now imagine if the zebra had a human brain. Chances are, this zebra would definitely *not* return to its activities so casually. We know it all too well. If we were the zebra, we would continue to think about the run in with the lion, thinking to ourselves "That was close. I'm so glad I was able to get away. My goodness, it would have been awful if I had not gotten away. Just imagine. What would my family do without me? What if the lion is back tomorrow? What if he's following me? What if? What *if!?*" We can spend days, weeks, or even months thinking about what could have happened and drive ourselves crazy. This thinking would even cause us to elevate our heartrates and cause adrenaline to begin coursing through our bodies.

This is the problem that many people face; their brains are more developed and evolved than other animals, and therefore can "constantly think, analyze, fantasize, predict and anticipate."[2] Other animals do not worry about these sorts of things. They are not worried or even thinking about things like "putting on weight or what will happen to the children if they aren't able to find a job or whether others like them or not or how to go about developing a good reputation."[3] Humans, on the other hand, have a "thinking, self-aware, and reflective mind; but also, one that can get caught in loops of thinking" between their emotions and their frontal lobes which can visualize and analyze

2. Gilbert and Choden, *Mindful Compassion,* 41.

3. Gilbert and Choden, *Mindful Compassion,* 41.

things.[4]

Psychology

This commonality of suffering as part of the human condition has spurred many attempts to discover solutions or tools to confront life. Such is the reason for the field of psychology. Psychology has traditionally sought to understand why people do what they do and, in the words of Abraham Maslow, hasbeen far more successful on the negative than on the positive side. It has revealed to us much about man's shortcomings, his illness, his sins, but little about his potentialities, his virtues, his achievable aspirations, or his full psychological height. It is as if psychology has voluntarily restricted itself to only half its rightful jurisdiction, the darker, meaner half.[5]

That idea sat on the bookshelves for nearly forty years until Martin Seligman decided to revisit the idea and pay more attention "to the good in people and in the world…[and], by using the same techniques and tools that help us explain weakness and prevent or treat illness, …enhance our understanding of strengths and promote well-being."[6]

Thus, a new field of psychology was born and has now been studied for little more than two decades. Similar ideas behind positive psychology have been around for millennia which is evident in the "thoughts of ancient philosophers and religious leaders who discussed character virtues, happiness, and the good society."[7] One of my professors during my master's program taught that religion has always

4. Gilbert and Choden, *Mindful Compassion,* 41.

5. Abraham Maslow, *Motivation and Personality* (New York: Brandeis University, 1954), 354.

6. Shane J. Lopez and Matthew W. Gallagher, "A Case for Positive Psychology," in *Oxford Handbook of Positive Psychology*, 2nd ed. Shane J. Lopez and C. R. Snyder (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 3.

7. Ed Diener, "Positive Psychology: Past, Present, and Future," in *Oxford Handbook of Positive Psychology*, ed. Shane J. Lopez and C. R. Snyder (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 7.

had the same goal that psychology, social work and therapy have had since their inception; to create a better life and to provide a method or model to achieve that ideal life.[8]

Independent of where people find meaning in their lives and learn more about how to obtain happiness, be it psychology or religion and spirituality, the focus on the positive side of psychology has been helpful to many. Many in the field of positive psychology have worked diligently to understand "the factors that lead to mental health rather than mental illness – on cultivating strengths rather than eliminating weaknesses."[9] In this way, focusing on the good and the bad has helped many through giving them a goal to work toward rather than simply focusing on how broken they are. Many practical approaches to positive psychology have been created.

Among these approaches we find activities such as meditation or mindfulness, spirituality, narrative therapy, positive thinking and talking, posttraumatic growth, and resiliency training.[10] Over the years, many of these practices have evolved. Of primary importance to these modules, the practice of meditation and mindfulness has evolved into many branches, one of which being the field of

8. Drawn from personal notes taken during a class on January 9, 2020 taught by Mark Butler, Ph.D. Though these fields share the same goals, they have a history of not working well together. Also see P. Scott Richards and Allen E. Bergin, "Toward Religious and Spiritual Competency for Mental Health Professionals," in *Handbook of Psychology and Religious Diversity*, ed. P. Scott Richards and Allen E. Bergin (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2014), 5.

9. Neff, Kristin, *Self-Compassion: The Proven Power of Being Kind to Yourself* (New York: HarperCollins, 2011), 133-134 (electronic version).

10. See the following works: Shauna L. Shapiro, "Meditation and Positive Psychology," in *Oxford Handbook of Positive Psychology*, ed. Shane J. Lopez and C. R. Snyder (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 599-664; Stephen Joseph, *What Doesn't Kill Us: The New Psychology of Posttraumatic Growth* (New York: Basic Books, A Member of the Perseus Books Group, 2011); Stephen Madigan, *Narrative Therapy* (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2019); Glen R. Schiraldi, *The Resiliency Workbook: Essential Skills to Recover from Stress, Trauma, and Adversity* (Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publication, Inc., 2017).

compassion work.[11] Thus, "the discipline of psychology has applied the concept of compassion to the understanding of people's emotional states, postulating that the development of self-compassion (through mindfulness) may be beneficial in alleviating depression and other psychological conditions."[12]

Compassion Work

The mind is a powerful thing and as it can create such vivid imagery as to cause physiological symptoms of depression, anxiety and the like, it follows that it can also be useful to harness the power of the mind to construct positive and compassionate imagery.[13] Compassion work has three goals; to notice compassion when it is "being directed to us from other people," to increase one's compassion for others, and to increase one's compassion for themselves, called self-compassion.[14]

The mindful cultivation of compassion has been shown to be a tactic that has proved helpful to confront problems ofcognition, emotion, relationships, and suffering in general.[15] There have been many who have desired to study the effect of compassion on the mind. Among the most prominent is Paul Gilbert, who has worked and studied Buddhism to better understand compassionate mindfulness. Gilbert is the creator of CFT from which these modules borrow many elements. These elements will be explored later on and specific exercises will be given in for instructing groupwork modules. The full

11. Shauna L. Shapiro, "Meditation and Positive Psychology," 606.

12. Darcel Reyes, "Self-Compassion: A Concept Analysis," *Journal of Holistic Nursing* 30, no. 2 (June 2012): 82.

13. Gilbert and Choden, *Mindful Compassion,* 236. Imagery is a powerful tool which can even cause physiological changes. For example, imagining delicious food can stimulate the salivary glands in the mouth even though the food is not present. Also see Paul Gilbert, *The Compassionate Mind* (Oakland, CA: New Harbinger, 2009), 186-187.

14. Gilbert and Choden, *Mindful Compassion,* 234-235.

15. Kristin Neff, "Self-Compassion: What it is, What it Does, and How it Relates to Mindfulness," in *Handbook of Mindfulness and Self-Regulation*, ed. Brian D. Ostafin, Michael D. Robinson, and Brian P. Meier (New York: Springer, 2015), 121-137.

experience of CFT requires extensive training and should be guided by a licensed therapist, which chaplains generally are not.[16]

Another prominent figure is Kristen Neff who has conducted many scientific studies on how building one's self-compassion through mindfulness can help individuals with how they see themselves and their relationships.[17] Neff states that

our research shows that self-compassionate people experience more positive emotions in their lives – such as enthusiasm, interest, inspiration, and excitement – than those who are self-critical. They also report being much happier… self-compassion doesn't erase negative feelings, it embraces them with care and kindness… if you're able to comfort yourself every time something painful happens, staying centered and not running away with reactivity, you can start to trust yourself. You can more easily find inner courage when hard times hit, knowing that you can get through almost anything with the help of your own compassionate support.[18]

In other words, the practice of mindful compassion work has proven to help many with a number of difficult problems and challenges in their lives.[19] Their studies suggest that the cultivation of compassion has been most effective in treating and coping with symptoms of depression and anxiety, which are common mental illnesses in our world today.[20] Of particular importance to the audience of compassion groupwork modules, self-compassion has proved to be "a proactive coping strategy that can be brought to bear in times of crisis, reducing

16. For a large body of research conducted by Paul Gilbert on the effects of compassion see https://www.compassionatemind.co.uk.

17. For a large body of research conducted by Kristin Neff on the effects of self-compassion see https://self-compassion.org/the-research/.

18.Neff, *Self-Compassion*, 134. (electronic version).

19. Within the word "compassion" lies the word "compass." With this in mind, we can think of compassion as being a compass for our lives. It can show us where to go, what to do, how to help others and ourselves.

20. Neff, "Self-Compassion: What it is, What it does, and How it Relates to Mindfulness," 123.

suicide risk for veterans."[21]

While many acknowledge that having more compassion for themselves and for others can be very beneficial, it seems like a lofty goal. The problem is that many do not know how to cultivate compassion for themselves, and so a model for how that is done is needed. Such models have been given by both Neff and Gilbert and will be explored here. The following material will explain the concept of compassion work and lay out a model for how it is done and how it helps.

Compassion Concept Model

The following research will combine a number of studies on compassion and mindfulness in order to show where in every-day life the practice of compassionate mindfulness can help.[22] While the model may oversimplify at times, it is presented in an effort to help the general population understand compassion.

Negative Reactions

It is well known that everyone goes through times of emotional difficulty or what some would call suffering. According to an article exploring the use of self-compassion in nursing, there are generally 6 "realms of suffering."[23] While many perceive their suffering to be extremely personal, the truth is that suffering is universal; everyone goes through times of difficulty. Suffering can be experienced in an intrapersonal and interpersonal dimension. The main realms of suffering, though not exhaustive, can include an event or situation,

21. Jessica Kelliher Rabon, et al., "Self-Compassion and Suicide Risk in Veterans: When the Going Gets Tough, Do the Tough Benefit More from Self- Compassion?," *Mindfulness* 10, no. 12 (September 2019): 2554.

22. For a diagram, see the Concept Model for Compassion Work in this book.

23. Reyes, "Self-Compassion: A Concept Analysis," 84. These are also referred to as antecedents to compassion. These realms are: an event/situation, a physical response to pain or illness, a relationship or social upset, an emotional reaction, a psychological state such as mental illness or addiction, or spiritual alienation.

a physical response to pain or illness, a relationship or social upset, emotional reactions, a psychological state such as mental illness or addiction, and lastly spiritual alienation.[24] One form of suffering in this list may be comorbid with another form.

Once one of these realms affects a person they tend to go through a course of pre-cognition in which they are processing the experiences they find themselves in. It is in this brief period of pre-cognition that a person initiates a conversation in their minds in order to process.[25] This conversation could include some kind of rationalization for unhealthy behavior due to their situation.[26] Once the mind has quickly processed the realm of suffering and engaged in a quick, sometimes imperceptible, mental conversation, then an "emotion or gut response" results.[27]

As a result of early cognition, a person may begin to feel intense emotions. These emotions fall into one of three systems; threat, drive, or soothe. These emotion systems were evolutionarily important, and still are, and so continue to survive in our minds today. The threat system "helps us detect and respond to threats and harms. It is the source of emotions like fear, anxiety, anger, jealousy, and disgust."[28] These emotions help to alert us of some danger. For example, if we are feeling anxious it may be because something has frightened us. This is where many servicemembers will tend to stay while they are deployed. They live in a constant state of stress, what has been described as "condition yellow," where warriors "must strive to exist" at all times

24. Reyes, "Self-Compassion: A Concept Analysis," 84. Adapted to better fit my model.

25. Charles Zastrow, *Talk to Yourself: Using the Power of Self-Talk* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1979), 2-4.

26. For example, if a person is having a stressful day they might have a conversation in their mind where they say they deserve to treat themselves by eating a large piece of cake.

27. Zastrow, *Talk to Yourself*, 2. The conversation described here is called "self-talk" by Zastrow.

28.Gilbert and Choden, *Mindful Compassion,* 62.

"ready to play, fight, frolic, mate or run. They are survivors."[29] Upon returning home from deployment it is possible that the warrior lived in the threat system long enough that symptoms of PTSD can be formed.

The drive system "helps us detect, be interested in, and take pleasure in securing important resources that help us survive and prosper… it is the source of emotions like excitement and pleasure."[30] These emotions are intended to help us to seek and thrive in our fast-pace lives. Without our drives, we may be apt to sit around the house all day and do nothing. Again, a servicemember will tend to dwell in the drive system along with the threat system. Doing so will keep him aware and prepared. Members of the Armed Forces are trained to be driven and motivated to accomplish a mission, this is a strong drive.

The soothe system "is linked to feelings of contentment in situations where we are not threatened or driven to get things we want. It is a source of emotions such as peaceful well-being, contentment, safeness, and feeling connected."[31] Such emotions are not very high on the priority list of many people in the world we live in today; we seldom hear people saying "slow down and relax," rather we are pushed to go faster and be stronger. Servicemembers will tend to disregard the soothe system or soothe themselves in unconstructive ways such as video games. If they learn to tap into their soothing system they will be better prepared to fight their battles. As former West Point Psychology Professor, Dave Grossman stated:

> managing daily stress is vitally important because we are continuously bombarded with it. Life-and-death, combat incidents are comparatively rare, but when they do occur, managing the emotional, physiological crisis after the event can be even more

29. David Grossman, *On Combat: The Psychology and Physiology of Deadly Conflict in War and in Peace,* (Warrior Science Publications, 2008), 30.

30. Gilbert and Choden, *Mindful Compassion,* 62.

31. Gilbert and Choden, *Mindful Compassion,* 63.

important.[32]

Many warriors attempt to find loopholes around their soothing system requirements such as caffeine, nicotine, etc.[33] Nevertheless, spending time in the soothe system is vital to mental well-being.[34]

Generally, when someone is overwhelmed with threat or drive emotions they will either attempt to smother them, or they will act out in some sort of irrational and maladaptive manner which can create addictive behaviors.[35] When someone ignores or does not acknowledge their emotions or does something unhealthy they can be overwhelmed with shame which can only make the suffering worse.[36] The process of ignoring the situation and emotions and deciding not to set out to fix it can be characterized as a type of internal dialogue called sustain talk.[37]

When the suffering gets worse, the person may continue to act out in self-destructive ways and self-critical self-talk until they are driven into depressive mindsets or self-hate. Self-criticism involves the person's drive systems and when their drives are not met, they can become overly critical or even threatening toward themselves. The consequences of this vicious cycle are quite negative and include things like a decrease in one's perceived self-worth, characterized by guilt, shame, or self-hatred, a decrease in their ability or desire for self-care, a decrease in their autonomy through powerless addiction or compulsion, and a decrease in relatability resulting in isolation.[38] This cycle can become wired into the mind and may be very difficult

32. Grossman, *On Combat,* 18.

33. Grossman, *On Combat,* 22-29.

34. Gilbert, *Mindful Compassion,* 78.

35. Fight the New Drug, *Fortify: The Fighter's Guide to Overcoming Pornography Addiction* (Familius, 2015), 137.

36. Reyes, "Self-Compassion: A Concept Analysis," 84.

37. William R. Miller and Stephen Rollnick *Motivational Interviewing: Helping People Change* 3rd ed. (New York, NY: The Guilford Press, 2013), 86.

38. Reyes, "Self-Compassion: A Concept Analysis," 85.

to break out of. This is similar to the story about the zebra and the lion at the beginning of the chapter. We can very easily get caught up in loops between the "old and new brain."[39] It is a hard fact of life that we live with brains that are "full of conflicting motives, desires, and emotions that often don't work well together. This is one reason we are so susceptible to anxiety, depression, rages, and paranoia," not to mention maladaptive behaviors.[40]

Positive Reactions

And so, there needs to be a way to break the loop of self-destructive thoughts and actions. To get out of the loop, one must return to the emotions. By paying particular attention to suffering, pre-cognitive self-talk and resulting emotions one can be triggered into awareness of a problem. This "trigger," or catalyzing event, could come in the form of an intervention from close friends or a therapist, from hitting "rock bottom" if addicted, a spiritual awakening or a personal impression. Whatever the form of the trigger, the person realizes that "life has worth… that there is a choice… [to] embrace all aspects of the experience, viewing suffering with compassion and breaking the cycle of negativity but not disconnecting from the source of suffering."[41] This is a strong form of the persons inner change-talk.[42]

At this point the person gains awareness or acknowledgement that there is a problem. Unlike the person who ignores the emotions and suppresses them, a person who has been triggered into awareness will have the power or opportunity to work out their suffering. They will find motivation and determination to work and improve, and so they will seek healthy responses to their suffering; real solutions to their

39. Gilbert, *Mindful Compassion,* 38-45.

40.Gilbert, *Mindful Compassion,* 38.

41. Reyes, "Self-Compassion: A Concept Analysis," 85.

42. Miller and Rollnick, *Motivational Interviewing*, 86.

problems rather than forms of diversion which block their feelings. For those who find themselves challenged by addiction, this is classified as step one.[43]

Finding healthy, productive responses to suffering and difficult emotions is a way to challenge the pre-cognitive self-talk.[44] Minor cases of non-clinical suffering can go on to use compassion as a stand-alone tool. Clinical cases can use compassionate mindfulness to give power and efficiency to their other therapeutic interventions.[45] Healthy responses and coping are many and varied and so will not be covered here. They may require the help of a trained psychologist or psychiatrist or doctor, or they may be personal goals or actions that have been found to help the individual and are tailored to their own specific need. Some very effective, but "suspiciously eyed as 'alternative' in mainstream culture," treatments that involve the way we "breathe, chant, and move," compassion being one of them, are only recently being discovered by science but have been used "since time immemorial" in virtually "every religious practice."[46]

Compassion Work

Using compassion for one's self can prove to have very positive outcomes which will be reviewed below. The basic principle behind using compassion to cope is to descend below the suffering and the difficult emotions to understand them, learn from them and to "feed the demons."[47] Thus, facing the fears one has involves courage, which

43. Alcoholics Anonymous, *Alcoholics Anonymous: The Story of How Many Thousands of Men and Women Have Recovered from Alcoholism* (New York: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, 2001), 59.

44. Zastrow, *Talk to Yourself*, 2.

45. Reyes, "Self-Compassion: A Concept Analysis," 88.

46. Bessel Van Der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma* (New York: Penguin House, 2014), 209.

47. Gilbert, *Mindful Compassion,* 171-179. The concept of "feed the demons" means satisfying the underlying needs of suffering and difficult emotions rather than giving in to suffering through maladaptive coping. See Gilbert, *Mindful Compassion,* 273.

is a trait of compassion.[48] Working with compassion can be described best by its four attributes; self-kindness, mindfulness, wisdom, and common humanity.[49] It should be remembered that a greater sense of self-compassion does not mean the person is taking the place of the Holy. The purpose of these modules is to help religious understanding educate a person's use of compassion for self, based on their religious beliefs.

Self-Kindness

Common knowledge dictates that we can be our own worst critics. There is an insatiable voice in each person's head which criticizes their choices and actions for not living up to their own expectations. The ability to silence the critic within is vital so "that we be gentle and understanding with ourselves rather than harshly critical" or even hateful.[50] Self-kindness is not a selfish act of indulgence, rather, it is a process of giving yourself what you really need. By demonstrating kindness to ourselves we can train our brains to seek kindness rather than criticism. Thus, "self-kindness functions as the 'reciprocal golden rule,' one treats oneself with the compassion usually reserved for others."[51]This is possible because "humans are biologically designed to respond to kindness; we have specific brain systems that are designed for giving and receiving kindness."[52]

Of course, it can be difficult to be kind to ourselves when our automatic response has always been to criticize. Changing our inner

48. Gilbert, *Mindful Compassion,* 106. The other traits include wisdom, strength, warmth, commitment, and kindness. See Gilbert, *Mindful Compassion,* 283.

49. Neff, *Self-Compassion*, 41 (electronic version). Practically identical attributes are also found in Gilbert, *Mindful Compassion*. In order to begin working on the aspects of compassion work, it may be useful to measure one's own self-compassion by taking Kristin Neff's test to note where one lies on the "Self-Compassion Scale." See https://self-compassion.org/test-how-self-compassionate-you-are/.

50. Neff, *Self-Compassion*, 41 (electronic version).

51. Reyes, "Self-Compassion: A Concept Analysis," 83.

52. Gilbert, *Mindful Compassion,* 86.

dialogue can be tricky, but with the power of mindfulness, which will be explored more below, a person can change their critical self-talk.[53] This can be done by asking ourselves, mindfully, what lies behind the criticism. Many times, our self-critical emotions come from the drive emotional system described above. If we mindfully tune into what the critical emotion is saying, we can find the motivation behind it; a drive to achieve which was not satisfied.

It is important to exercise self-kindness as "an objective analysis of suffering, extending caring and understanding toward self" which is done by "accept(ing) one's flaws, releasing regrets, disappointments, and illusions about the way 'things could have been.'" [54] The releasing of these emotions and this suffering is a type of self-forgiveness which must be coupled with taking responsibility for one's actions.[55] Sometimes it can be helpful to imagine what a kind friend would say, and to repeat that to yourself. However, self-kindness requires honesty and a "willingness to take responsibility for actions that may have resulted in suffering without penance, guilt, or punishment for the behavior."[56] Self-punishment for mistakes will not solve any problems, however, mindful understanding and action will help solve problem.

Mindfulness

There is a bit of confusion about the distinction between meditation and mindfulness, and understandably so. An easy way to understand it is that meditation yields the ability to be mindful. In this way, meditation is like an exercise for the brain to increase one's mindfulness or ability to be aware of its own cognition. [57] Mindfulness

53. Neff, *Self-Compassion*, 31 (electronic version)

54. Reyes, "Self-Compassion: A Concept Analysis," 83.

55. Reyes, "Self-Compassion: A Concept Analysis," 83.

56. Reyes, "Self-Compassion: A Concept Analysis," 83.

57.Elizabeth Brown, "Mindfulness Meditation: A Mental Workout to Benefit the Brain," Harvard University, April 15, 2013, http://sitn.hms.harvard.edu/flash/2013/mindfulness-meditation-a-mental-workout-to-benefit-the-brain/.

has been described as the ability to "hover calmly and objectively over our thoughts, feelings, and emotions and then take our time to respond" thus allowing "the executive brain to inhibit, organize, and modulate the hardwired automatic reactions preprogrammed into the emotional brain."[58] In doing this, the idea is to focus on pain and difficult emotions, feelings or thoughts, which may seem counterintuitive, but it is vital "that we hold our experiences in balanced awareness, rather than ignoring our pain."[59] Rather than intensifying suffering, "mindfulness transforms suffering into an opportunity for spiritual and psychological growth. This transformation results in an alignment of emotional and rational processes."[60]

In simple terms, mindfulness has a way of rewiring the brain, and this can be done through repeated practice and meditation. In this way, mindfulness is about connecting the usually automatic brain to the body in order to create a better sync and thus increase autonomy.[61] Meditation has been used by many practitioners of behavioral medicine, and in fact, "the whole field of behavioral medicine has been profoundly affected by meditative practice."[62] However, it is beneficial to understand a few of the basic principles.

Dan Harris noted that it is important to remember that meditation and mindfulness "does not necessarily entail a lot of the weird stuff I

58. Van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score,* 62.

59. Neff, *Self-Compassion*, 41 (electronic version).

60. Reyes, "Self-Compassion: A Concept Analysis," 83. The author of this article does not offer a definition for what she means by "spiritual and psychological growth." The quote is used here to infer that a person may find growth in areas in which they feel weak. For this project specifically, the purpose is to use a person's existing spirituality or religious beliefs to access and understand compassion.

61. Gilbert, *Mindful Compassion,* 188-190.

62. Mark Finn and Jeffery B. Rubin, "Psychotherapy with Buddhists," in *Handbook of Psychology and Religious Diversity*, ed. P. Scott Richards and Allen E. Bergin (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2014), 360.

feared it might."[63] Mindfulness alone has been proven to be effective in many instances from:

> measurable decrease in various types of chronic physical pain, to a surprising relief that can come to those facing depression, anxiety, and eating disorders like anorexia and bulimia, to the cultivation of greater attentiveness for those who struggle to focus. There is even growing evidence that the cultivation of mindfulness, combined with other healthy activities, can literally change brain pathways.[64]

General principles of mindfulness include resting, creating an anchor, also known as grounding, working with attention, and sense awareness.[65] There are many different ways to follow and achieve these principles including online guided meditations, in-person meditation classes, or written instructions.

Resting involves finding a comfortable position and location free from distraction in order to facilitate maximum mental concentration and connection to one's body.[66] Once the body is sufficiently at rest and the brain is beginning to be in tune with the body it is necessary to find a source of concentration. This is also known as creating an anchor, or grounding, which is usually done through breathing

63. Dan Harris, *Meditation for Fidgety Skeptics* (New York: Spiegel and Grau, 2017), 10. Also see Grossman, *On Combat*, 330: "Yoga, Zen, and the martial arts may have some mystical connotations, but when you strip away the mysticism, all that is left is a simple process that allows you to gain conscious control over your unconscious nervous system, and then puts it to work for you." This is the essence of mindfulness.

64. Jacob Z. Hess, Carrie L. Skarda, Kyle D. Anderson, and Ty Mansfield, *The Power of Stillness: Mindful Living for Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2019), 102. Some have studied using mindfulness to help stop addictive behaviors, see Beverley Conyers, "5 Mindfulness Practices to Step Up Your Recovery," Hazelden Betty Ford Foundation, May 18, 2018, https://www.hazeldenbettyford.org/articles/conyers/5-mindfulness-practices-to-step-up-your-recovery. Also see Finn and Rubin, "Psychotherapy with Buddhists," 360.

65. Gilbert and Choden, *Mindful Compassion,* 187-212.

66. Gilbert and Choden, *Mindful Compassion,* 204-210.

deliberately, and can increase your ability to remain calm.[67] Studies show that focusing on breathing has been shown to have "enormous power to control your stress response."[68] Such studies have created what has been called tactical breathing.[69]

Working with attention can be described as if we were in a dark room and we were to shine a flashlight around the room. The things we cannot see would still be there, but we would not be paying attention to them until the beam of the flashlight hits it.[70] The same is true with mindfulness. We can shine our "spotlight" around the walls of our mind until we find something we want to explore or do not understand. Mindfulness draws its real power from seeking to understand what we find. One way to do this is summarized as an exercise called "Name it to Tame it" where once an emotion is found it must be named and understood, and thus it can better be controlled.[71] The importance of working with attention is evident in that many people do not have long attention spans and therefore we do not spend a lot of time working with the things that we really find distressing.[72]

What follows from attention work is a greater sense awareness. A common example of this sort of work is eating an almond in five minutes or eating an apple and paying close attention to each sense

67. There are many forms of anchoring and grounding, though breathing seems to be the most common.

68. Grossman, *On Combat*, 49, 331-332. Also see Moran Cerf, "Neuroscientists Have Identified How Exactly a Deep Breath Changes Your Mind," Quartz, November 19, 2017, accessed December 15, 2019, https://qz.com/quartzy/1132986/neuroscientists-have-identified-how-exactly-a-deep-breath-changes-your-mind/.

69. Grossman, *On Combat*, 322-339.

70. Gilbert, *Mindful Compassion,* 195.

71. Daniel J. Siegel and Tina Payne Bryson, *The Whole-Brain Child: 12 Revolutionary Strategies to Nurture Your Child's Developing Mind* (New York: Bantam Books, 2012), 27.

72. Gilbert and Choden, *Mindful Compassion,* 187-190. Also see Mike Wright, "Internet is Giving us Shorter Attention Spans and Worse Memories," The Telegraph, June 6, 2019, accessed December 15, 2019, https://www.telegraph.co.uk/technology/2019/06/06/internet-giving-us-shorter-attention-spans-worse-memories-major/.

before finishing a bite.[73] Many times we find ourselves on autopilot and we forget to pay attention to our senses rather than follow the common paths our brains have created. By being aware of the senses of the body, one can find which in muscles they carry their pain and work to understand what is causing that pain and why it is manifesting in the specific locations of the body.[74] Greater understanding of the senses yields greater autonomy and the ability to get to the root of suffering. In summary, mindfulness is a process of training and using the power of the brain to work with the body to find solutions to suffering.

While there are many types and programs of mindfulness, what is most important is finding the right balance of leading and following by the self or the person guiding the meditation. Meditation can be used in connection with a person's existing religious beliefs in order to increase the efficacy of practices such as prayer, confession, repentance, etc. One way to seek greater mindfulness is to pray for it from the source of all understanding and compassion; God. In the modules, we will explore one specific type of mindfulness involving the cultivation of a compassionate self in order to investigate suffering. For compassion work specifically, mindfulness is done from a compassionate stance and is motivated by goodness and kindness. If it does not have the qualities of compassion, mindfulness is little more than paying attention.

Cultivating the compassionate self requires commitment and work. Each person has a side of themselves that is compassionate, though it may be very small. Cultivating and exploring a person's compassionate self may involve focusing on the mind, compassionate imagery, a safe place, a compassionate color and other exercises.[75]

73. Gilbert and Choden, *Mindful Compassion,* 196-198.

74. Sean Grover, "Where do You Store Stress in Your Body? Top 10 Secret Areas," Psychology Today, July 11, 2018, accessed December 15, 2019, https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/when-kids-call-the-shots/201807/where-do-you-store-stress-in-your-body-top-10-secret-areas.

75. Gilbert and Choden, *Mindful Compassion,* 236-248.

The bulk of the modules deals with guiding servicemembers through the process of understanding their compassionate selves and how they can use that side of themselves to express compassion for themselves and others. Most significantly, the compassionate self becomes a new voice in the mind of the person meditating and is used to speak to the persons emotions and critical voices.[76] The compassionate self can be influenced and educated by many outside sources but for these modules the goal is to focus on a person's religious understanding.

If the idea of mindfulness and meditation is not appealing there are other options, such as simple stillness. Sometimes, just sitting with a problem can help to take away stress. Letting a question or difficult feeling be in the mind and thinking about where it came from can do a lot to empower a person to solve the problem. There may be times when sitting with a problem may take a very long time, but patient acceptance will help to avoid further difficulty until a solution is found. This can even work in times of faith crisis; in the quiet of the mind, rather than the many doubting voices of the world, an answer may be found.[77]

Wisdom

In the context of compassion work, a person who has wisdom "acknowledges the internal experience of suffering" and then turns their attention to alleviating that suffering which "results in skillful actions." [78] Paul Gilbert speaks of wisdom as the ability of a person to understand that they were born with an evolved "tricky brain" which is difficult to understand and work with, and which is not their fault for having, but is their responsibility to cope with. [79] The human

76. A video titled "Compassion for Voices: A Tale of Courage and Hope" demonstrates how the compassionate self voice can interact with the three emotion systems of threat, drive, and soothe. See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VRqI4lxuXAw.

77. Hess, Skarga, Anderson, and Mansfield, *The Power of Stillness*, 74-90.

78. Reyes, "Self-Compassion: A Concept Analysis," 83.

79. Paul Gilbert's term.

brain is a wise brain which has the "ability to evaluate one's behavior, understanding the positive and negative factors that influence one's actions." [80]

Such factors include one's inherited genes, the environment they live in, or the brain that we are born with; one that is "tricky." Such a "tricky brain" could plausibly lead a servicemember to have doubts about killing while holding the conviction that they are not supposed to kill or are haunted by having killed or seen death.[81] Wisdom in such an instance would lead such a servicemember to realize that they have a brain which seems to haunt them, but they can work and exercise their brains to expel those troubling thoughts or images. Such realizations could lead the servicemember to have more compassion for themselves by remembering the reasons for which they went to war or joined the military. From that date, they were conditioned to live in a state where they must act for the good and safety of themselves and their teams.

One model describes three types or aspects of wisdom: discriminating wisdom, reflective wisdom and affective wisdom.[82] Discriminating wisdom involves evaluating the positive and negative factors that have led to one's actions to understand where those factors came from and how to deal with them in the future. Reflective wisdom involves cultivating realistic vision and insight about one's behaviors that may compound or cause suffering. Finally, affective wisdom involves developing an attitude free of judgement for one's self and realizing that self-judgement leads to disconnection from the self and others. Each of these aspects of wisdom combine to create a better vision of the world and circumstances that each of us find ourselves in.

80. Reyes, "Self-Compassion: A Concept Analysis," 83.

81. Not all servicemembers kill as part of their profession, but military organizations work to support the killing that some servicemembers do to protect their country. Most or all servicemembers are involved in combat and the effects thereof.

82. Reyes, "Self-Compassion: A Concept Analysis," 83.

Such wisdom helps us to avoid identifying too much with our mistakes or suffering to the point where we become linked to them. Once we have understood these things, then the work begins on how to deal with them in healthy manners rather than damaging ways.

It is important to remember that compassion is not a weak trait in one's life. Rather, the wisdom of letting compassion work in one's life involves understanding that compassion necessitates and comes from courage, strength, and commitment.[83] Such an understanding opens the mind to realize that using compassion can help one to find solutions through seeking compassion from others in order to better feel compassion for themselves and then to express it for others.

Common Humanity

Finally, another key in compassion work is understanding common humanity. Some could consider this to be a facet of wisdom; realizing that our problems are not our own, but that we share many of the same difficulties in our lives. So often, "the tendency of humans is to think that suffering is a solitary experience. This illusion of separateness intensifies the experience of suffering."[84] In reality, no one is free from suffering of some sort or another. The realization that the difficulties we go through in our daily lives are common to all is interestingly freeing. Where the common reaction for many in hard times is to seek isolation, reaching out to others who have also gone through hard times invites compassion from others towards ourselves and helps us to know what we can do to overcome our challenges. Thus, common humanity "provides a sense of belonging that replaces feelings of isolation."[85]

Ultimately, common humanity involves "feeling connected with

83. Gilbert and Choden, *Mindful Compassion,* 106, 283.

84. Reyes, "Self-Compassion: A Concept Analysis," 83.

85.Reyes, "Self-Compassion: A Concept Analysis," 83.

others in the experience of life."[86] A feeling of connection can help to break free of isolation which can compound suffering.[87] Many times, people will withdraw from society out of embarrassment or out of a sense of their need to gain autonomy over their lives by taking control of their situations by themselves. In reality, looking outward and seeking humanity, relationships, and community is where true solutions can be found: "restoring relationships and community is central to restoring well-being."[88] Understanding common humanity not only helps one to feel less isolated and better about their situations, it also "promotes a willingness to assist others who are suffering."[89] This creates an upward spiral of service. Helping others relieves a person's ill feelings towards themselves as they feel they made a difference in someone else's life.

Compassion work can help an individual to recognize (1) compassion from others who have experienced similar suffering, (2) compassion for self as they understand that they are not isolated in their suffering and are therefore not an exception to the rule, and (3) compassion for others through an increased desire to serve others.

Positive Emotional Responses and Consequences

Compassion work is done through cultivating self-kindness, mindfulness exercises, gaining wisdom and seeking common humanity. Each of these attributes of work take a significant amount of practice and can be studied in depth individually, but by seeking

86. Neff, *The Power of Self-Compassion,* 41 (electronic version).

87. Amy Novotney, "Social Isolation: It Could Kill You," *Monitor on Psychology* 50, no. 5 (May 2019): 32.

88. Van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score,* 38.

89. Reyes, "Self-Compassion: A Concept Analysis," 84. Such a sentiment is also evident in the final step of addiction recovery programs such as Alcoholics Anonymous.

more compassion in one's life, suffering can be ameliorated.[90] Studies have shown that compassion work can help people cope with pain,[91] autoimmune disorders, trauma, eating disorders and psychosis.[92] One study shows that compassion work helps people to experience "lower level of anxiety and depression, higher levels of happiness, stronger resilience, and better body image."[93] As a recent book about the power of stillness and meditation in the daily lives of a Christian faith group stated:

> rather than automatically pushing away uncomfortable feelings or grasping after pleasant ones, we can begin to practice something else: stepping back and observing what is happening – with more openness and less immediate judgement. From that place, we can consider how every emotion can teach us something – even the ones we don't like: sadness, fear, anger, and so on. But it becomes pretty hard to learn from our feelings if we can't be with them in a stance of openness.[94]

Indeed, there are many positive emotional responses to the practice of compassion, some of which include learning from one's failures,

90. As with almost any practice, it takes time to note improvement. However, through focused attention, repetition, practice and creating the right environment the brain can rewire itself, even after the brain has supposedly reached its final stage of development. See Vivian Giang, "What it Takes to Change Your Brain Patters After Age 25," Fast Company, April 28, 2015, accessed December 15, 2019, https://www.fastcompany.com/3045424/what-it-takes-to-change-your-brains-patterns-after-age-25. Some studies show that in as little as 8 weeks, mindfulness can reduce one's stresses and improve the structure of the brain. See Sue McGreevey, "Eight Weeks to a Better Brain: Meditation Study Shows Changes Associated with Awareness, Stress," The Harvard Gazette, January 21, 2011, https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2011/01/eight-weeks-to-a-better-brain/. Also see Antoine Lutz, Julie Brefczynski-Lewis, Tom Johnstone, and Richard J Davidson, "Regulation of the Neural Circuitry of Emotion by Compassion Meditation: Effects of Meditative Expertise," *Plos One* 3, no. 3 (March 2008).

91. Hess, Skarga, Anderson, and Mansfield, *The Power of Stillness*, 140.

92. Mary Welford, *Compassion Focused Therapy for Dummies* (West Sussex, United Kingdom: John Wiley and Sons, 2016), 32 (electronic version).

93. M. Sue Bergin, "Cultivating Self-Compassion," *BYU Magazine,* 75, no. 4 (Fall 2019): 22.

94. Hess, Skarga, Anderson, and Mansfield, *The Power of Stillness*, 127. The idea of this book is to use the power of God in the pursuit of stillness and meditation.

increased motivation to keep trying to improve, and a gradual self-mastery.[95] Contrary to the negative consequences of old brain tendencies stated above, the positive consequences of compassion work include increased self-worth, an increase in the ability and desire for self-care, an increase in their autonomy or self-control, and increased relatability with common humanity.[96]

Evaluation[97]

Among the many models for recovery, counseling, compassion work and therapy there is a need to review how the exercises are working for the subject. So too, there is a necessity for the person employing compassion work in their lives to evaluate how their experience has improved. Not all people will see the positive results stated above. Such studies are a representation of the possibilities that can happen with compassion work. As each person is different, certain exercises and practices will have differing results. One should not expect to see the same results of another automatically, but should look to their experience of compassion with hope based on those results.

Thus, it is necessary to refine a person's plans for recovery and resiliency and to keep practicing. This includes making plans for the future use of compassion in a person's life by evaluating what proved to be challenging in the practices and what seemed to be the most helpful. Such an evaluation can transform "future suffering through the experience of self-compassion."[98] A person's experiences with compassion work can help them to be more apt and able to cope with future difficulties. Evaluation of past experiences can help a person to be wise as they approach new situations.

95. Reyes, "Self-Compassion: A Concept Analysis," 82.

96. Reyes, "Self-Compassion: A Concept Analysis," 85.

97. Zastrow, *Talk to Yourself*, 267, 278-279. See stage 8.

98. Reyes, "Self-Compassion: A Concept Analysis," 82.

Challenges to Compassion

The above information favors the positive results and consequences of compassion in an attempt to show that it can be useful and has proven to be useful for many in the past. However, it must be understood that compassion is not a panacea. The practice of meditation and mindful compassion was intended "to assist us in diving deep within and challenging who we believe we are" rather than cure all our ills.[99] Some can confuse the idea of meditation to be the solution to all problems and suffering when in reality, meditation and mindful compassion is meant to act as a space in which to find solutions to suffering. Truly, simply stopping and acknowledging automatic responses can be more important and powerful than actually meditating.

While the research above demonstrated many possible outcomes of compassion work, the studies may be fallible and misrepresented.[100] Correlation does not imply causation, meaning that just because something happened as a result of an independent variable does not mean that the results were dependent upon that independent variable.[101] It is important to seek out professional therapy and other recovery options in order to have the best results. As stated above, independent compassion work can add to the effectiveness of other interventions, but in extreme cases it should not be used as the only tool.

Compassion and Strength

It may be assumed by many that compassion and its related work is weak or soft and therefore has no place for those who believe that

99. Catherine Wilkholm, "Seven Common Myths About Meditation," The Guardian, May 22, 2015, https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/may/22/seven-myths-about-meditation.

100. Wilkholm, "Seven Common Myths About Meditation."

101. "Why Correlation Does Not Imply Causation in Statistics," Math and Science.com, May 10, 2017, accessed March 12, 2020, https://www.mathtutordvd.com/public/Why-Correlation-does-not-Imply-Causation-in-Statistics.cfm.

success only comes through hard work and assertiveness. I assume that there are many servicemembers who fall into this mindset, and yet they may be searching, unsuccessfully, for relief and instead try to "power through" their problems. They may believe that simple positive thinking will do nothing to help their situation but that only hard work produces progress, but this may not be totally true. In an environment such as the military exists a stoic attitude that servicemembers must keep their problems to themselves and push their feelings deep within themselves. The idea behind this is that if one can separate their emotions from the things they need to do, they will not hesitate to act.[102] However, in reality, "mental training helps you make better decisions, 'which hopefully results in as few casualties as possible'" in a military engagement.[103] Compassion work is a type of this mental training. The truth is that:

> in war, compassion… requires courage. That is why, in a situation where cruelty is the norm, compassion is so unexpected. Soldiers are taught to disregard the humanity of the enemy so they can act against them. When individuals act generously for someone who is in danger, even at the risk of their own life, such actions are noteworthy and inspiring… a real hero is a compassionate one.[104]

And yet, many do not make the connection between compassion and the warrior attitude. They must break through their ideas and realize that "compassion is not about some 'softy' form of kindness – though it is about kindness. It is also not about submissive behavior, weakness or only turning the other cheek. It's about coming to important social and personal dilemmas and difficulties with a particular focus and

102. Richard Adams, "Stoicism and the Profession of Arms," in *Key Concepts in Military Ethics*, ed Deane-Peter Baker (New South Wales, Australia: University of New South Wales, 2015), 28-32.

103. Harris, *Meditation for Fidgety Skeptics*, 117 (electronic version).

104. Jerry Borrowman, *Compassionate Soldier: Remarkable True Stories of Mercy, Heroism, and Honor From the Battlefield* (Salt Lake City: Shadow Mountain, 2017), 1.

mind-set."[105] It is about being strong in order to be your own strongest advocate to discover what you really need.

Warriors have described themselves as "compassionate and violent; we are humane and animalistic; we are protectors and killers."[106] Compassion can be the drive behind a military member's desire to fight and serve. Such a desire comes from a motive to protect and care for others, their families, the freedoms they enjoy in the nation, the cause of peace and liberty, their religious beliefs and freedoms and their fellowman.[107] In that, all service members are compassionate. Colonel Dave Grossman describes this as a sheepdog mentality.[108]

Grossman postulates that there are three types of people in the world: sheep, wolves, and sheepdogs. Sheep are the common, everyday citizens that do not want to get into or cause trouble nor acknowledge that trouble exists. Wolves are the sorts of people that cause or wish to cause harm on others for their own personal gain or pleasure. Sheepdogs are those which desire to protect the sheep from the wolves. Grossman asks: "what if you have a capacity for violence, and a deep love for your fellow citizens? Then you are a sheepdog, a warrior, someone who is walking the hero's path."[109] Appealing to such an image can give servicemembers a compelling image and understanding of compassion in their lives and a basis upon which to build.

The mark of a true warrior is one who "creates change of some sort"

105. Gilbert, *The Compassionate Mind*, 398.

106. Grossman, *On Combat*, xv.

107. For servicemembers it is more important to focus on these aspects of compassion than having compassion for the enemy, beyond at least acknowledging the enemy's humanity. Denying their humanity, or demonizing the enemy, can lead to cruel acts that cannot be taken back and can lead to PTSD and other symptoms of regret and shame for servicemembers. They need to build compassion for themselves in being able to do their job and do it professionally.

108. See Grossman, *On Combat,* 180-184 for a full explanation of sheep, wolves, and sheepdogs.

109. Grossman, *On Combat*, 181.

and who's primary focus is "on helping others – and mindfulness… is an essential skill for this kind of fight."[110] Thus, a warrior is one who goes against the status quo. They "refuse to be swept up in the dominant culture of unconsciousness" and seek to "carefully examine the conventional narrative and assumptions of the day."[111] Such an enterprise involves "leaning into – and learning from – whatever story lines and emotions we encounter… rather than playing our usual game of avoidance."[112] And so, "meditation isn't this soft, fluffy thing. You're facing your fears. You're facing your stresses head-on… and it's giving you the tools to do that more effectively, and to not be swept away by them."[113] In this way, those who meditate and are compassionate are leading the pack, refusing to be sheep and instead insisting on training themselves and creating the mindsets they need to be ready for anything and to be able to effectively cope with their struggles.

It has been shown that denying one's feelings and emotions is unhealthy.[114] This begs the case that healthy, emotional outlets must be part of one's life, especially for a warrior, sheepdog, or servicemember. While attention to detail in such situations is vital and important, if a person expects only perfection in their lives they can expect to feel anxious, depressive, and generally find less satisfaction with life.[115] Instead of pushing feelings down and deep to avoid failure, it can be

110. Harris, *Meditation for Fidgety Skeptics*, 117 (electronic version).

111. Harris, *Meditation for Fidgety Skeptics*, 118 (electronic version).

112. Harris, *Meditation for Fidgety Skeptics*, 120 (electronic version).

113. Harris, *Meditation for Fidgety Skeptics*, 116 (electronic version).

114. Richard Adams "Stoicism and the Profession of Arms," 31: "Stoic idealism contributes to post-traumatic stress… (and) Stoic soldiers, fulfilling their duty as they see it, become implicated in crimes of obedience." Also see Finn and Rubin, "Psychotherapy for Buddhists," 362 where the author states that "with careful support… meditation can be employed to help treat… PTSD."

115. Kawika Allen and Kenneth T. Wang, "Examinging Religious Commitment, Perfectionism, Scrupulosity, and Well-Being Among LDS Individuals," *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality* (March 2014).

more beneficial, and the mark of a master of self, to practice mindful compassion.

Some may find themselves resistant to the idea of mindfulness, compassion, and getting beneath the deep emotions due to their psychology. When someone begins to "lift the lid on painful and unprocessed emotions" they may find they have "little ability to experience or tolerate" those emotions in a "compassionate, warm, and receptive way."[116] Such people are "living in an inner world of self-criticism and self-dislike" where "mindfulness can become very tricky."[117] When such resistance arises, it can be helpful for the person to work solely on their mindful abilities to soothe themselves before they begin to delve deeper into the difficult emotions. In many cases, these people may need to seek out professional therapists to help them to process their inner voices and experiences before they begin their compassion work journey.

For members in the military who still find themselves unable to accept compassion for themselves it can be helpful to focus and emphasize the science and "health benefits… and a spotlight on the aspirational figures who were meditating themselves, especially professional athletes" in order to break through their barriers.[118] Throughout the book *Meditation for Fidgety Skeptics* a number of personnel at the Virginia Military Institute experienced positive results to implementing mindfulness in their routines.[119] While they

116. Gilbert and Choden, *Mindful Compassion,* 142.

117. Gilbert and Choden, *Mindful Compassion,* 142.

118. Harris, *Meditation for Fidgety Skeptics*, 116 (electronic version). Health benefits included "increased resilience to post-traumatic stress disorder, a scourge of the modern military." For a small list of well-known celebrities who meditate see Will Chou, "32 Famous Celebrities and Successful People Who Meditate (The Ultimate List)," January 8, 2019, https://willyoulaugh.com/celebrities-who-meditate/.

119. Harris, *Meditation for Fidgety Skeptics*, 272 (electronic version). One service member, who had initially believed that "meditation would erode his edge" found that as he had been meditation "after workouts and also after stressful calls" he had found that the practice "helped both his focus and his sleep."

were initially skeptical and scared to try for fear of being perceived as strange, they went against the culture to value their own self-care, which is essential for a warrior.

Erasmus, a fourteenth century theologian, wrote a work called the *Handbook of a Christian Knight* which set out to delineate "how to be strong while remaining virtuous in a dangerous world."[120] The work contains twenty-two principles or rules which are enlightening for the present subject of compassion, faith, mindfulness and the warrior mindset. Such principles, to name a few, include:

- Increase your faith; even if the entire world appears mad.
- Act upon your faith; even if you must undergo the loss of everything.
- Analyze your fears; you will find that things are not as bad as they appear…
- Train your mind to distinguish good and evil.
- Never let any setback stop you in your quest; we are not perfect – this only means we should try harder…
- There are two dangers: one is giving up, the other is pride; after you have performed some worthy task, give all the credit to someone else.
- Turn your weakness into virtue; if you are inclined to be selfish, make a deliberate effort to be giving…
- Calm your passions by seeing how little there is to gain; we often worry and scheme about trifling matters of no real importance.
- Speak with yourself this way: If I do what I am considering, would I want my family to know about it?...

120. Grossman, *On Combat*, 372.

- Repent your wrongs; those who do not admit their faults have the most to fear.[121]

Clearly, Erasmus understood the necessity for servicemembers to subscribe to faith, the need of a warrior to be mindful, and the capacity to be compassionate in their actions towards others and themselves. In the following section, we will follow Erasmus' guidance and explore how to use faith to educate compassion and mindfulness.

121. Grossman, *On Combat*, 372-374.

Mindful Compassion and Religion

Many times, connecting mindful practices with religious understanding and tradition helps such practice to be more effective.[122] By better understanding multiple and general views of compassion from different faith traditions the practice of compassion work can be better communicated in the pluralistic environment in which chaplains work. This is a central idea of the modules; that religious ideals and figures of compassion can improve and empower our personal understanding of compassion to help ameliorate and heal suffering. In fact, "compassion has been a central component of many religious and spiritual traditions across the centuries."[123] And so, we will explore the understanding of compassion for others and for themselves in a few different religions, as well as possible compassionate figures in each faith, and where the practice of compassion work can fit into the everyday religious practices of each. These three areas will give us a comprehensible but limited view of where mindful compassion work can fit in each religious practice.[124]

General Religious Compassion

Before getting into each religion specifically it will be beneficial to get a general overview of what each faith has in common. Nearly every faith values compassion for others and for the self, each has its

122. See myth 6 of Wilkholm, "Seven Common Myths About Meditation." Interventions should be able to work together. Psychological practices can give religious practice and understanding more power. The opposite is also true; religions can give psychological practices more power. In this case, the give "therapeutic" practice of mindfulness, which is a Buddhist tradition, can make a person's religious experience more powerful. For a greater look at how to use religion and therapeutic practices together see *Handbook of Psychology and Religious Diversity*, ed. P. Scott Richards and Allen E. Bergin (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2014).

123. Welford, *Compassion Focused Therapy for Dummies,* 32 (electronic version).

124. This is not meant to be an in-depth comparative analysis, but rather an informative exploration, and with these three steps we can see where compassion work fits in the following religions.

own examples of compassion in its sacred texts or in its tradition, and each has space for mindfulness and compassion work.

Understanding of Compassion

It has been postulated that "occupation with distress, affliction, and poverty is one of the pillars… of religious thought in general."[125] In this way, each faith system has needed to find a way to explain and cope with these types of suffering. The question that many have brought up is why God allows such suffering in the world. Each religion has its own theodicy, or answer to this question. Such an inquiry to what different faiths say about the existence of evil could fill volumes of books and so will not be explored here. However, we will explore briefly the action response of a handful of faith traditions to the "theodical problem" which are embodied in compassion, or what many call The Golden Rule.[126]

Karen Armstrong, a former religious sister in the Roman Catholic Church has made it her life's work to study the commonalities of all religions, specifically that of compassion. She went on to create the Charter for Compassion which calls "upon all men and women to restore compassion to the center of morality and religion."[127] Having studied compassion for most of her life, Armstrong concluded that every world religion highlights the golden rule; compassion.[128] It is the universal religious principle.

The most well known applications of compassion are those found in the great religions, particularly Buddhism and Christianity, and

125. Khen Lampert, *Traditions of Compassion: From Religious Duty to Social Activism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), viii.

126. Lampert, *Traditions of Compassion*, ix.

127. Charter for Compassion, "Charter for Compassion," https://charterforcompassion.org/images/menus/charter/pdfs/CharterFlyer10-30-2012_0.pdf.

128. Karen Armstrong, "My Wish: The Charter for Compassion" (TED Talk), February 2008, accessed March 10, 2020, https://www.ted.com/talks/karen_armstrong_my_wish_the_charter_for_compassion?language=en.

also Islam and Judaism. These religions have made historical uses of compassion and, to this day, still present themselves, in certain senses and contexts as the 'religions of compassion.' They maintain vast institutions for caring for the weak, poor, and downtrodden, and compassion is the hallmark of their social missionary activities… These religious traditions claim the notion of compassion to originate with their founders… and relate to it as the highest realization of the original religious intention. Finally, they have expanded the social expressions of compassion to such practices and institutions as charity and self-sacrifice and transferred them from the moral sphere to the metaphysical sphere: compassion is presented in these religions as the path to salvation, as holiness itself.[129]

The golden rule is to do unto others as you would have them do unto you.[130] This is the basis of compassionate understanding as we have discussed prior. Hidden within the golden rule is the understanding that in order to treat someone else the way you want to be treated, you must first know how you want to be treated. It then follows that you must treat *yourself* the way you want to be treated. And so, within the understanding of compassion and the golden rule lies the basis of compassion for others as well as for ourselves, the latter not being focused on as much, and so is one of the aspects we are seeking to improve in these modules. Compassion ultimately comes from deity, and so we can model the way that compassion is shown by studying and seeking to emulate the holy.

Compassionate Figures

Each tradition can generally understand the value of requesting

129, Lampert, *Traditions of Compassion*, viii.

130. John Bowker, *World Religions* (New York: DK Publishing, 2006), 208.

compassion from God and using it to improve their lives.[131] Requesting compassion can involve a person requesting that God have compassion on themselves or others, that they be able to use God's compassion as a source of compassion for others, that they be able to better understand what compassion is, means, and how it works, or that they be able to receive God's sense of compassion for themselves to improve their own self-compassion or self-worth. Such compassion can help the person's experience with repentance, which in itself can be seen as a very self-compassionate act, or their general outlook on life and its struggles. Seeking greater self-compassion can even be a way to show love to God as a way of appreciating and respecting the gifts God gave you; your body, spirit, and self.[132] And so, exploring possible figures, such as God could be beneficial.

Paul Gilbert, creator of CFT, has noted that many people like using religious figures as their compassionate figures in practicing compassion work. He is not against that preference, but he is wary to point out that the compassionate image must be "ideal" with "every aspect of compassion that is important" to the person.[133] This is because he has noticed that there are times when religious figures have "associations that are not helpful, such as the worry that Christ

131. In a way, this is a kind of acceptance that a person has little power of themselves to effect change in their lives. This is a call back to common humanity in which we realize we need extrinsic help combined with our own intrinsic efforts. Alcoholics Anonymous believes this principle when it makes the distinction that seeking a higher power makes the step work more effective. Thus, seeking a higher power, or compassionate figure, in compassion work makes it more effective. See step two in *Alcoholics Anonymous*, 59. For a quick, easy-to-use guide for how and where to best use healing practices, meditation being one of them, refer to P. Scott Richards and Allen E. Bergin, "Religious Diversity and Psychotherapy: Conclusions, Recommendations, and Future Directions," in *Handbook of Psychology and Religious Diversity*, ed. P. Scott Richards and Allen E. Bergin (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2014), 476-483.

132. Many Christian denominations are very grateful for the gift of agency or free will. In my own faith tradition moral agency is a gift to be able to "act" rather than be "acted upon." 2 Nephi 2:14.

133. Gilbert, *The Compassionate Mind*, 257.

would be rather 'down' on sin, whereas the compassionate image is never judgmental or punitive in any way."[134]

Of course, each person's interpretation of a common religious figure will be different from another person's and so, one should be careful in cultivating their ideal compassionate figure.[135] As a rule, the compassionate figure should have the following qualities: a wise mind, strength and fortitude, great warmth and kindness, and a non-judgmental attitude.[136] The idea of the compassionate figure is to give your own compassionate self a goal to strive for, or a template to work with; a way to achieve the compassionate mind which will speak to the self-critic, the emotions, the suffering, etc.

Religious Practice and Compassion Work

Again, we must remember that compassion work is not meant to take the place of repentance or improvement. Rather, it is meant to help the process. In seeking to forgive self or improve "it is important not to see the pursuit of holiness as a battle with yourself," but to have patience and remember that "our creator has, in a manner of speaking, hardwired us as carnal beings" and so it can be difficult.[137] This idea speaks to both the ideas of wisdom and common humanity explored earlier in the chapter. The idea is to practice self-kindness in order to make the process easier and more pleasant rather than arduous and shameful.

Some believe that the current Western push for meditation

134. Gilbert, *The Compassionate Mind*, 257.

135. For my own faith tradition, God's love for humanity is not contingent upon their actions. He loves all people regardless of their mistakes or life situations, and is not judgmental. So, God or Jesus Christ is a perfect compassionate figure for me.

136. Gilbert, *The Compassionate Mind*, 257..

137. Don H. Staheli and Lloyd D. Newell, *Habits of Holy Men* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2018), 65. As stated earlier in the chapter, it is a principle of CFT that humans evolved a tricky brain. Faith traditions can interpret this differently; that God created humanity with a tricky brain. Thus, the central idea of living with a difficult brain can be used in both intelligent design or creationist ideas as well as in natural selection or evolutionist ideas.

practices, like compassion work, undermine the roots of the practice in Eastern tradition. However, if we can connect the religious meaning of mindfulness and compassion again to the practice, it will give people a building block and provide their efforts for mindfulness with more power and meaning. Studies have even shown that meditation has led many to be more religious.[138] If we can build upon the religious upbringing of an individual and help guide meditation, then progress should follow. As discussed previously, compassion work is more effective when it is paired with religious beliefs and practices. This can be done in many creative ways, most common among them is during the faith's practices in divine communion such as meditation or prayer. Having built a common understanding among basic religions we can now go into the main religions to better understand how to help individual practitioners. In doing so, I will assume that the reader knows the basics of each religion and so will not recount them here, but rather, I will focus on what each religion believes specifically about compassion.[139]

138. Wikholm, "Seven Common Myths about Meditation."

139. For deeper exploration into each of the religions explored in the rest of the chapter see the many World Religions textbooks published, or the following:Buddhism: Heinz Bechert and Richard Gombrich, *The World of Buddhism: Buddhist Monks and Nuns in Society and Culture* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1984); Christianity: Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of Christianity* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1953); Islam: John L. Esposito, *What Everyone Needs to Know About Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011) and, Judaism: Louis Finkelstein, *The Jews: Their Religion and Culture* (New York: Schocken Books, 1971).

Buddhism

"May all things be happy and safe, may they all be truly happy…
Let this kindly heart, this boundless mind, embrace the whole world.
Above, below, across, unobstructed, free from hatred, free from ill will.
Standing, walking, sitting, lying down, while awake,
Cultivate this mindfulness, this it is said, is the sublime dwelling place."
Metta Sutta[140]

Understanding of compassion

As I have stated above, the practices of CFT have been developed from Buddhist tradition; specifically, that of Mahayana Buddhism which seeks to understand and use mindfulness to cope and improve upon life's events.[141] Much of the study about compassion work has drawn from ideals of Buddhist altruism, lovingkindness, and right living or the eight-fold path. [142] These elements are evident in both Gilbert and Neff's work. It is interesting to note that a religious or spiritual tradition spurred such understanding and practice. In truth, behavioral health in general "has been profoundly affected by meditative practice."[143] However, while "Buddhist teachers are currently in fashion, Buddhism cannot claim" the area of mindfulness and meditation "for its own because of the profound impact of yoga's disciplines derived from Hindu lineages."[144]

What has been so attractive about Buddhist practice is its "empiricism as opposed to belief and the fact that it offers psychological methods for personal change" and has thus "invited

140. Lampert, *Traditions of Compassion*, 74-75.

141. Gilbert and Choden, *Mindful Compassion,* 24.

142. Roger R. Keller, *Light and Truth: A Latter-day Saint Guide to World Religions* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2012), 73-74.

143. Finn and Rubin, "Psychotherapy with Buddhists," 360.

144. Finn and Rubin, "Psychotherapy with Buddhists," 360.

integration, borrowing, and collaboration with Western psychology" such as CFT.[145] Thus, the CFT principles above have already covered Buddhism's understanding of compassion. Nevertheless, Buddhist compassion can be summed up as being able to "offer a certain response to pain" by understanding that "human beings are trapped in an illusory reality dictated by the dynamics of desire and attachment to its objects."[146]Thus, the Buddhist understanding of:

> compassion is the ability to feel the pain and suffering of the other, as well as being a way of relating that is universal in two senses: first, it can be experienced by all people, especially those who have been liberated from the illusory conceptions of the self and the world. The melting of the ego and the emptying of reality enable one to enter into the world of the other and to discover the final, surviving element after deconstruction of the worldview – compassion, revealed as the ultimate and accordingly, most authentic substance, which defines man for what he is. Second, compassion is universal in that it is directed at every person, without distinction – rich and poor, child and adult, and so on. In fact, from the Buddhist perspective, compassion is a way of relating also to all animals, plants, and so on, and is not designated for human beings alone. This lack of discrimination is, of course, rooted in the Buddhist fundamental view of life, in all its forms, as suffering.[147]

Compassionate figures

The first and foremost compassionate figure for Buddhists is that of the Buddha. In understanding the story of Siddhartha Gautama, one begins to realize that he gave up himself in order to help others

145. Finn and Rubin, "Psychotherapy with Buddhists," 365.\

146. Lampert, *Traditions of Compassion*, 177.

147. Lampert, *Traditions of Compassion*, 73-74.

and teach them about how to reach Nirvana.[148] It was the Buddha that discovered the different types of suffering; "poverty and suffering… disease, decay, death, and cruelty," and seek to cure them. The Buddha preached the middle way; moderation in all things. Thus, the Buddha is the ultimate figure of compassion for Buddhists. He showed the way for all bodhisattvas because he was the first.

A bodhisattva is described as a person who's "self-compassion sustains the compassion that saves others from suffering." [149] In other words, they have decided to postpone their full enlightenment by helping and supporting others on their way to enlightenment. Thus, any bodhisattva is a possible compassionate figure. One could potentially imagine themselves as a bodhisattva by engaging in the following aspiration: "May I awaken my inner potential for wisdom and compassion, and may I take active steps to bring this enlightened awareness into the world and help free beings from suffering."[150]

One of the most prominent of bodhisattvas is Chenrezig, in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, who achieved enlightenment and vowed to help all beings to be "free of suffering" and promised that if not, his body would "shatter into a thousand pieces."[151] After working tirelessly for eons the number of beings still suffering was excessive and incomprehensible, and so he gave up his mission and shattered according to his vow. Amitahba, the Buddha of limitless light took pity on Chenrezig and reconstructed him, giving him one-thousand arms so that he "was even more powerful than before" and returned to work to "free living beings from suffering."[152] Many Tibetan Buddhists use Chenrezig as their choice of compassionate figure in order to channel their compassion work and build their compassionate selves.

148. Gilbert and Choden, *Mindful Compassion,* 14.

149. Reyes, "Self-Compassion: A Concept Analysis," 81.

150. Gilbert and Choden, *Mindful Compassion,* 183. This is called the bodhisattva prayer.

151, Gilbert and Choden, *Mindful Compassion,* 168-169.

152. Gilbert and Choden, *Mindful Compassion,* 169.

Religious practice and compassion work

Compassion work, as it has been described in this chapter, is the same as the religious practice of Buddhism. It consists of following the eight-fold path and seeking to exercise compassion for all through kindness, mindfulness, wisdom and knowing common humanity. Some Buddhists strive greatly to act upon their understanding of compassion, called "engaged Buddhism" through selfless service where "mindfulness must be engaged. Once there is seeing there must be acting. Otherwise, what is the sense of seeing?"[153] Each Buddhist tradition has different ideas and goals, but generally the life and practice of Buddhism is involved with cultivating compassion for all.

Christianity

"Keep them from the evil…
For their sakes I sanctify myself,
that they also might be sanctified through the truth…
That they all may be one…
That the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them."
John 17:19-26 KJV

Understanding of compassion

It is important to realize that "central to Christianity is its depiction of suffering as meaningful and leading to the promise of the resurrection. This establishes a deeply held narrative related to meaning and transformation."[154] Christians can view compassion work as a way to process suffering and find greater meaning and thus find more power to transform themselves through their experiences. In

153. Lampert, *Traditions of Compassion*, 172. Quoting Thich Nhat Hanh in *Peace is Every Step: The Path of Mindfulness in Everyday Life*.

154. Edward P. Shafranske, "Psychotherapy with Roman Catholics," in *Handbook of Psychology and Religious Diversity*, ed. P. Scott Richards and Allen E. Bergin (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2014), 64.

fact, "many Christians who have found that God's grace and love are experienced most profoundly in situations of distress or suffering"[155] In this way, compassion is seen by many Christians as the automatic response to suffering. In this way, suffering, evil, and the bad of the world are turned into positives which "work together for good to them that love God."[156]

The understanding of compassion is so central to the Christian faith that there are many words that can be interchanged with "compassion" such as charity, love, service, grace, mercy, etc. Augustine argued that interpretations of scripture must not be left until a compassionate interpretation of it has been found, and that interpretation will then be the closest to the intent of the writers.[157] Christians are taught to love everyone and to judge no one, to be an example and to build communities, and to seek learning and understanding in order to best help others. These are all central ideas to compassion work.

Perhaps the idea of self-compassion is most evident and most taught, though not as widely practiced, unfortunately, in the Christian faith than in any other faith tradition. Such an understanding is evident "in the parables of the Good Samaritan, the Lost Sheep, and in the Great Commandment of 'love thy neighbor as thyself.'"[158] Some have noted that "the Christian concept of compassionate love, similar to the Jewish variation, was grounded from the outset on self-love as

155. Alister McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction* (Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell, 2017), 203.

156. Romans 8:28.

157. Armstrong, "My Wish: The Charter for Compassion" (TED Talk).

158. Vance P. Theodore, "Care Work - Factors Affecting Post 9/11 United States Army Chaplains: Compassion Fatigue, Burnout, Compassion Satisfaction, and Spiritual Resiliency" (PhD diss., Kansas State University, 2011), 39.

a condition for loving the other."[159] And so self-compassion is a pre-requisite in Christianity for the ability to demonstrate compassion for others.

Compassionate figures

The obvious compassionate figure, and arguably most compassionate figure in any religious tradition, is that of Jesus Christ. Jesus is the ultimate embodiment of a bodhisattva as we explored above. While having worked out His own salvation he made it possible for every human being to do the same. He is thus the perfect example of what humanity ought to strive to become. He set his life as the example of how to live in a compassionate way in fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah to "preach the gospel to the poor… heal the broken hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord."[160] He lived his life in service to others.

By so doing, "the wretchedness of human compassion stands in stark contrast to the power and beauty of the compassion of the Savior."[161] Such a perfect example for Christians "can constitute an excellent supplement and source of hope in our cynical, cold, technocratic, and rational world, a world of predators and quarry."[162] Thus, Jesus Christ is the quintessential exemplar of compassion and a perfect compassion figure. According to atonement theology, Christ descended into all human suffering with a motivation to alleviate it. This fits the definition of compassion perfectly. When Christians feel like it is hopeless to even try to be compassionate to others in such

159. Lampert, *Traditions of Compassion*, 178.

160. Isaiah 61:1. See also Luke 4:18-19.

161. Lampert, *Traditions of Compassion*, 176

162. Lampert, *Traditions of Compassion*, 176.

a cruel and fallen world, let him seek out his Maker and sue for the divine gift of His compassion for mankind. God the Father, in giving the life of His Son for mankind also provides a possible compassionate figure upon which Christians can set their focus for compassionate imagery.[163]

Religious practice and compassion work

Each faith tradition may have "different language" to describe elements of compassion and mindfulness. For example, prayer, fasting and pondering can be substituted for mindfulness and cultivation of compassion. That does not mean, however, that mindfulness by itself cannot make its way into Christian practice and worship.[164] One way to think about mindfulness and being in the present moment is to remember to use "today's manna today" and letting God take care of "tomorrow's manna tomorrow."[165]

Christianity, and Jesus Christ especially, has a special space for the understanding of common humanity. Jesus understands all humans because He shared in our common humanity and human experience. Furthermore, Christians generally believe that we are children of God, and so we all share that one aspect and relation in common. Christians also believe in the fellowship of Christ, in that we have a common belief and so should make space for each other.[166]

For some Christians, "suffering is tied to personal failing and conceptions of sinfulness. Hardships may be attributed to be the

163. John 3:16.

164. For ideas on how to take part in Christian mindfulness see Bill Gaultiere, "Jesus' Solitude and Silence," Soul Shepherding, accessed December 15, 2019, https://www.soulshepherding.org/jesus-solitude-and-silence/.

165. Hess, Skarga, Anderson, and Mansfield, *The Power of Stillness*, 98. This refers to God giving the Israelites mana in the desert which would spoil if it were kept beyond the day it was gathered. God gives the blessings we need when we need them, and so we do not need to worry about tomorrow. This is a practice of being fully present in the current moment and refocusing attention. This example can also be used for Judaism.

166. Sometimes this is a little strained by doctrinal differences.

consequences of moral failure and is viewed as a form of just punishment."[167] Some "may relentlessly attack themselves and spiral into a deepening depression and spiritual struggle filled with guilt and self-condemnation" which can compound suffering.[168] Thus, compassion work is a way to stop such cyclic tendencies of suffering.

Pentecostals are familiar with the idea of "praying through" a problem.[169] This process is akin to using compassion work and mindfulness to gain "new and less painful ways of looking at painful past relationships and experiences, while reinforcing the new thoughts and feelings by repetitious reflection" or meditation.[170] Richard D. Dobbins suggests an in-depth process of praying through suffering which involves four steps.[171] The third and fourth of these steps is useful on its own as a process of meditation where a person asks for "God's help in finding a different and less painful way of interpreting" suffering and then spends "time thanking and praising God for the new way of looking at the old hurt – and mentally rehearsing the new interpretation."[172]

Latter-day Saints[173]

"And let every man esteem his brother as himself,
And practice virtue and holiness before me.
And again, I say unto you,

167. Shafranske, "Psychotherapy with Roman Catholics," 64.

168. Shafranske, "Psychotherapy with Roman Catholics," 64.

169. Richard D. Dobbins, "Psychotherapy with Pentecostal Protestants," Religion and Psychotherapy in *Handbook of Psychology and Religious Diversity*, ed. P. Scott Richards and Allen E. Bergin (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2014), 170.

170. Dobbins, "Psychotherapy with Pentecostal Protestants," 170.

171. Dobbins, "Psychotherapy with Pentecostal Protestants," 170-171. This intervention could be quite useful for chaplains to use in individual counseling, or in groups.

172. Dobbins, "Psychotherapy with Pentecostal Protestants," 171.

173. As this is my personal faith, I wanted to briefly speak to its practices in this project. Some elements might resonate with other Christian denominations as well. Hess, Skarga, Anderson, and Mansfield, *The Power of Stillness*.

Let every man esteem his brother as himself."
D&C 38:24

Understanding of compassion.

The understanding of compassion for members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is no different from that of general Christianity, except that there are additional examples and explanations of compassion in the expanded canon which includes the Book of Mormon, the Pearl of Great Price and the Doctrine and Covenants.

Latter-day Saint belief "empowers members to believe in their divine worth, expect divine care and guidance, and actively choose their life's course." We feel blessed as literal sons and daughters of a loving Heavenly Father who cares deeply for us and so has given us the opportunity to live a life that will teach us what we need to know in order to reach exaltation; to live in the presence and manner of God. Even if we make mistakes, "great peace comes in realizing that our inherent value as children of God remains unchanged."[174]

Concerning Self-compassion specifically, one prominent Church leader counseled that "many of you are endlessly compassionate and patient with the weaknesses of others. Please remember also to be compassionate and patient with yourself."[175]

Compassionate figures.

Just as mainstream Christianity believes in the perfect example of Jesus Christ and in the love of God, so too do members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. They are encouraged by thinking about "crowds on both sides of the veil," meaning those here on earth and our ancestors and loved ones who have died, "are rooting for you, and you have the Father, your Elder-Brother Savior, and the Holy

174. Staheli and Newell, *Habits of Holy Men,* 70.

175. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, "Forget Me Not," the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, November 2011, https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/2011/10/forget-me-not?lang=eng.

Spirit as your personal coaches, always available through prayerful consultation," or mindfulness.[176] And so, the three-member Godhead provide us with three possible compassionate figures we can focus on through compassion work. Through compassion work, they believe they can be blessed with an increase of the Holy Spirit followed by a greater desire to endure to the end which entails confronting the next problems in life with God and His compassion and our own new sense of self-compassion.

Religious practice and compassion work.

For Latter-day Saints the vocabulary of compassion work is synonymous with already existing practices in our faith. For example;

> 'practice mindfulness regularly' sounds more like 'read the scriptures and pray daily.' Our version of 'it's really valuable to prioritize regular retreat' is instead, 'be in the temple often.' 'Pondering' is also typically used instead of 'meditation,' and 'reverence' instead of references to silence or stillness. Once we begin to translate into familiar terms, the powerful parallels become evident.[177]

Furthermore, mindfulness can give power to prayer through the understanding that "prayer is not compounded of words, words that may fail to express what one desires to say, words that so often cloak inconsistencies, words that may have no deeper source than the physical organs of speech, words that may be spoken to impress mortal ears."[178] In reality, "the dumb may pray, and that too with the eloquence that prevails in heaven. Prayer is made up of heart throbs and the righteous yearnings of the soul, of supplication based on the

176. Staheli and Newell, *Habits of Holy Men,* 71. The quote continues inspiringly stating "The power is in you; you were born with it. True holiness is within your reach."

177. Hess, Skarga, Anderson, and Mansfield, *The Power of Stillness*, 20.

178. James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Chris: A Study of the Messiah and His Mission According to Holy Scriptures both Ancient and Modernt* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1990), 222.

realization of need, of contrition and pure desire."[179] This is a beautiful bit of wisdom that educates and encourages the practice of prayer and supplication.

Islam

"In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful.
Praise be to God, Lord of the worlds,
The Compassionate, the Merciful…
thee we worship and from Thee we seek help.
Guide us upon the straight path."
Qur'an 1 al-Fatihah:1-6[180]

Understanding of compassion

Much discussion has taken place around Islam and their concepts of peace due to incidents of terrorism. Such acts by radical practitioners of the faith of submission to the compassionate and merciful God, Allah, have given the faith a black eye. In reality, "compassion represents the true spirit of Islam" and Islam is a religion of peace.[181] Muslims are characterized for their religious conviction and firm belief and desire to practice their faith in every moment of their lives. When asked if compassion were central to Islam, Asghar Ali replied that:

> a real Muslim is one who despite being firm in his/her faith tradition shows equal love and compassion for all human beings whether they belong to his faith tradition or not. Every faith tradition is unique and should be recognized as such but it should not become a tool of discrimination… there is no justification in showing any discrimination on the basis of faith as far as the

179, Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 222.

180. Taken from Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *The Study Quran: A New Translation and Commentary* (New York: HarperCollins, 2015).

181. Asghar Ali Engineer, "The Concept of Compassion in Islam," *Global Religious Vision* 2, no. 1-11 (July 2001): 12.

Qur'an is concerned.[182]

Indeed, many agree that Allah, who is referred to in the Qur'an 114 times as "the Compassionate and Merciful" really "wanted to teach Muslims, among other things, to be compassionate and merciful in their relations with their fellow human beings."[183] The text of the Qur'an "wants to liberate (the) poorer and oppressed sections from their situation."[184] Such a religious texts, which is generally well understood among Muslims, will help them to implement compassion in their lives and motivate them to act to relieve such suffering.

Compassion is not meant to be given just to those who are suffering, "believers or nonbelievers," but it is meant to go to all creatures which Allah has created, animals and plants included.[185] Such an all-encompassing spread of compassion surely is meant to cover the self as well. Thus, Muslims should understand that they need to be self-compassionate as a reflection of love upon the things Allah created.

One Muslim, living in the West, heard about Kristin Neff's work on self-compassion and was inspired. She argues that, for Muslims, self-compassion "gives us hope in Allah's Mercy, makes us more patient with the failings of others, and best of all, gives us the space to forgive ourselves when we make mistakes."[186] Though this is a Western ideal combined with an Eastern tradition, it translates well for Muslims who are seeking to avoid self-criticism.

182, Engineer, "The Concept of Compassion in Islam," 19. Original punctuation and grammar retained.

183. Zeki Saritoprak and Sidney Griffith, "Fethullah Gülen and the People of the Book: A Voice From Turkey for Interfaith Dialogue*," The Muslim World*, 95, (July 2005): 333.

184. Engineer, "The Concept of Compassion in Islam," 15.

185. "Compassion in Islam," What-When-How In Depth Tutorials and Information, accessed December 15, 2019, http://what-when-how.com/love-in-world-religions/compassion-in-islam/.

186. Raidah Shah Idil, "Self-Compassion and You," Sisters Magazine, accessed December 15, 2019, https://www.sisters-magazine.com/self-compassion-and-you/.

Compassionate figures

As discussed above, the first verses of the Qur'an refer to the "Compassionate God."[187] Thus, Allah and His characteristics becomes a primary compassion figure which Muslims should strive to live their lives like. Of course, 99 characteristics are many, but given the number of times Allah is referred to as compassionate, that characteristic should be given priority.[188] Muslims are sure to recognize that they are meant to have a "positive relation of God to the world, life, and man."[189] Thus, God is concerned about man and is therefore compassionate. Furthermore, Muslims are to emulate God in the way they interact with the world, life, and man. This seems to fit the ideals of compassion work very well.

Perhaps a more approachable compassionate figure for Muslims is that of Muhammad. Muhammed was himself a great sign of the compassion of Allah because He spoke to mankind through Muhammad so that mankind could know the will of God.[190] Muhammed was to preach the will of Allah and live after the manner of Allah, and so was meant to be the example of compassion, and so he makes the ideal compassionate figure. The power of his compassion is even more tangible when one realizes that though he was terribly persecuted he "never condemned anyone who treated him badly."[191]

Religious practice and compassion work

187. Translated from Rahmah.

188. Traditionally, there are 99 names for Allah in the Qur'an. However, there are many more than 99 if one were to go through and count them.

189. Yvonne Y. Haddad, "Sayyid Qutb Ideologue of Islamic Revival" in *Voices of Resurgent Islam,* ed. John Esposito (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 77.

190. "Compassion in Islam," What-When-How.

191. "Compassion in Islam," What-When-How. Some disagree, remembering that Muhammed is recorded to have had difficulties with and a dislike of the Jews.

If one only focuses on the five pillars Islam they realize that at least two of them have to do with compassion; zakat and salat. Zakat, or "alms giving" is "an institutionalized form of charity. The word 'zakah' means 'purification' and symbolizes that the act of 'giving' as one of purification" it is an "act of gratitude" which represents 'the unbreakable bond between members of the community, whom Prophet Mohammed described as like the organs of the body: if one suffers then all other rally in response.'"[192] This is a perfect example of common humanity.

Salat, or prayer is another facet of Islam which is directly tied to compassion and compassion work. During the rakah, or prayer ritual, there is time and flexibility to pray for whatever the one praying may desire, and so, seeking compassion through deep meditation in this moment should prove to be very effective for Muslims. In conjunction with this praying and request for compassion, "expiation of one's sins" requires Muslims to "feed the hungry or to liberate the slaves."[193] Thus, compassion, characterized once again by its definition as a call to action, is an act of absolution for Muslims.

Judaism

"Thou shalt not avenge,
nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people,
But thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."
Leviticus 19:18 KJV

Understanding of compassion

Jews draw their understanding of compassion from the things they are commanded to do in the Torah in scriptures such as the one cited above as well as Deuteronomy 6:4-6 and Zechariah 7:9. Among these

192. Zari Hedayat-Diba, "Psychotherapy with Muslims," in *Handbook of Psychology and Religious Diversity*, ed. P. Scott Richards and Allen E. Bergin (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2014), 296.

193. Engineer, "The Concept of Compassion in Islam," 16.

is the command from God, or Yahweh, to show mercy, deal justly, and be compassionate to every man. The command in Leviticus is to love they neighbor as thyself. While some Jews, especially anciently, wonder if "neighbor" means all men or if it only refers to fellow Jews, it is generally understood that they should love everyone. Also, in the Leviticus text is a command similar to that which we find in the Christian tradition, to love thy neighbor *as thyself*. This reference begs once again the necessity to show compassion and love toward one's self. One "modern Jewish girl" interprets the call for self-compassion in her faith tradition in not to simply accept human imperfection but to "acknowledge our negative traits or emotions and love ourselves despite them (unconditional love) yet also work on improving our negative traits or addressing negative emotions in a constructive way (conditional love)."[194] She also states that "the Torah provides many tools for refining our character traits and redirecting our negative emotions" in a similar way that compassion work does, so combining the two can be very effective.

Jews seek to live "a life conducted in accordance with the divine laws – that is, a life of obeying the commandments" and see such a life as "an expression of the will of God in the truest form."[195] Thus, the commandments to "practice benevolence and charity, to care for the orphans and widows, to console mourners, and to visit the sick are the worldly manifestations of divine compassion."[196] The understanding of compassion is drawn directly from the voice of God. The Israelites were commanded to "walk in his (God's) ways" and so live their life the way God does.[197] In participating in such divine compassion "their mere fulfillment can be assumed to produce a transformation in the

194. Jenna Marin, "What is the Jewish Perspective on True Compassion and Self-Esteem?" Modern Jewish Girl, May 23, 2017, https://modernjewishgirl.com/what-is-the-jewish-perspective-on-true-compassion-and-self-esteem/.

195. Lampert, *Traditions of Compassion*, 15.

196. Lampert, *Traditions of Compassion*, 15.

197. Deuteronomy 8:6.

person fulfilling them and lead her to feel, understand, and, perhaps, in some way participate in divine compassion."[198]

Compassionate figures

There are many figures found in the Torah. First and foremost is Yahweh; described as "merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth."[199] Another of the most compassionate and most relatable is Abraham who pleaded for mercy upon the unrighteous who were still in Sodom and Gomorrah and God was swayed by his pleadings.[200] Another is Rachel who sacrificed her happiness and her marriage to the blind Jacob because she could not bear her sister Leah's pain if she did not enter the marriage as her father desired. Rachel went so far as to hide "beneath the bed on which Leah and Jacob lay and conversed with Jacob so that he would hear her voice and not realize the deceit."[201] Another possible figure is Ruth who gave up her own nation and people to follow her mother-in-law.[202] Outside of the Torah there are also many possible compassionate figures from Jewish history. The most prominent being Hillel the Elder who taught the "Golden Rule" in the Talmud which stated "that which is hateful to you, do not to your fellow. That is the whole Torah, and the rest is commentary."[203] Certainly, Hillel was a wise man who taught great truths, and he was a compassionate man and taught others to do the same and so makes a great compassionate figure. It is encouraged that chaplains inquire of those who are in the

198. Lampert, *Traditions of Compassion*, 14-15. For more information on compassion in Judaism, especially from non-canonical or deuterocanonical texts, see "Compassion in Judaism," What-When-How In Depth Tutorials and Information, accessed December 15, 2019, http://what-when-how.com/love-in-world-religions/compassion-in-judaism/.

199. Exodus 34:6.

200. Genesis 18:24-35.

201. Lampert, *Traditions of Compassion*, 26.

202. Ruth 1:16.

203. Babylonian Talmud, Shabbat 31b. Some even attribute Jesus' teaching of the two great commandments as a reiteration of this Golden Rule from Hillel.

classes which figures they consider to be the best representation of compassion in their faith traditions. Such a question can provide more figures than these.

Religious practice and compassion work

As stated above, Judaism is much more concerned with right practice than right belief and so, "turning to action in times of discomfort and tribulation is… stylistically familiar for many Jews."[204] In turning to action, Jews will tend to jump at the opportunity to exercise their commandments by serving others and seeking to learn more about keeping the commandment to love their neighbor and themselves. As we have discussed previously, the concept of compassion is all about acting upon empathetic feelings. Jews have a culture of right action. So much so that true compassion is seen as doing more than what the law requires. Such compassionate actions and compassion work can take place in the Jews' prayers, festivals, and services.[205] The concentration inherent in the way Jews pray also lends itself to the cultivation of mindfulness and compassion work. Since Judaism involves communities and culture, the idea of common humanity is not a foreign concept and should be readily accepted.

Non-Faith

"No matter who we are,
no matter how successful,
no matter what our situation,
compassion is something we all need to receive and give."
Catherine Pulsifer

204. Lisa Miller, Yakov A Barton, Marina Mazure and Robert J. Lovinger, "Psychotherapy with Conservative and Reform Jews," in *Handbook of Psychology and Religious Diversity*, ed. P. Scott Richards and Allen E. Bergin (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2014), 274.

205. Also refer to footnote 162.

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Understanding of compassion

The understanding of compassion for those who do not believe in deity may come from an evolutionary point of view similar to that given by Paul Gilbert in *Mindful Compassion* as we have explored previously in this chapter. For the sake of ease in this section I characterize non-faith as humanism or atheism. Those who consider themselves agnostic could refer to the ideas of all the other religions to seek out their understanding of compassion.

Khen Lampert, in his book *Traditions of Compassion*, argues for a "radical compassion" which does not lean on the concepts of religious compassion, but rather on "an intentionality toward the other that includes an unraveling of a reality of distress and an identification of the elements whose alteration will lead to an easing or complete disappearance of the distress;" it is a compassion that "requires a change in reality to eliminate any possibility" of further distress.[206] It is evident that, in many of the religious understandings of compassion, those who practice compassion do so out of an obligation or as sort of investment for future reward.[207] The compassion of non-faith, however, does not rely on any sort of perceived self-serving compassion in which the compassionate person will receive recompense for their compassionate actions. In fact, one study suggests that "atheists and agnostics are more driven by compassion to help others than are highly religious people."[208]

Compassionate figures

The most obvious figures of compassion for those who of no faith would be the real people in their lives who have taught them what

206. Lampert, *Traditions of Compassion*, 174.

207. This certainly is not true for all faiths nor for all who seek to be compassionate due to religious understanding.

208. Live Science Staff, "Atheists More Motivated by Compassion than the Faithful," Live Science, May 1, 2012, https://www.livescience.com/20005-atheists-motivated-compassion.html.

love and compassion are. These might be friends, family members, teachers, mentors, or noteworthy figures from history, especially those who did not profess faith. Those who do not profess faith will have a blank slate on which to create their compassionate figure and thus should seek to create a vivid, new image in their minds characterized by wisdom, strength and fortitude, great warmth and kindness, and a non-judgmental attitude.[209]

Practice and compassion work

In the instance where a person who does not profess faith desires to cultivate more compassion in their lives, they can dive into the practice of meditation and seek to understand more about the principles of compassion work stated earlier in this chapter from an evolutionary standpoint as Paul Gilbert presents, alongside Buddhist ideals, in ***Mindful Compassion***. Of course, those who of no faith should be respectful of those who seek to cultivate compassion with religious understanding. In fact, they may have something to gain by seeking to better understand how a religious person does this and learning about their own religious guiding principles.[210]

Conclusion

Whatever the faith tradition be for a chaplain, they can help to teach about compassion in a pluralistic environment through the common religious understandings of compassion. "The Jewish and Christian chaplains come from their Old and New Testament environment; the Muslims from the Qur'an, and the Buddhists; the Buddhavacana 'the Word of Buddha.' These 'scriptures,' 'canonical texts,' or 'sacred writings' act as guidelines" for the chaplain's understanding and basis

209. Gilbert, *The Compassionate Mind,* 257. For a detailed process of how to create a compassionate figure from scratch see pages 258-260.

210. Some who view Buddhism as less of a religion and more of a life style may even decide to adopt the Buddhist ideals and practices more completely.

for compassion.[211]

By exercising and cultivating compassion through compassion work, we can avoid getting caught up in loops of negative, critical, and catastrophic thinking and be more like the zebra at the beginning of the chapter that can get through the trial of the lion chasing it and then continue grazing and fulfilling its true needs.

This supporting research explored the work of positive psychology and compassion work through nurturing self-kindness, practicing mindfulness, seeking wisdom and relating to common humanity. It then looked at some of the challenges of compassion work before we sought to understand how different religious beliefs can offer different, yet similar perspectives for understanding compassion, compassionate figures within each tradition that can be used in compassion work,
and where compassion work can fit within each religion's established practices.

211. Theodore, "Care Work," 40.

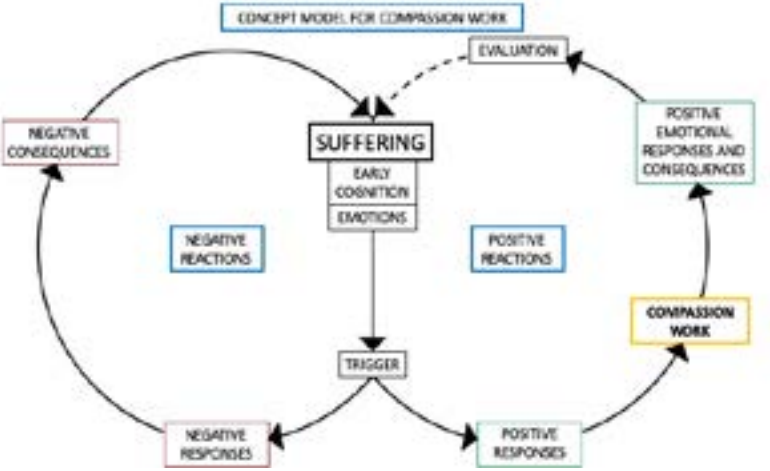
Summary of Supporting Research

This section has explored the necessity for compassion in life. It explored how compassion work fits into the field of positive psychology to mitigate future difficulties. Compassion work entails noticing compassion from others, increasing compassion for others, and seeking to have more compassion for ourselves. This is done by cultivating self-kindness, mindfulness, wisdom, and common humanity. Employing compassion work helps people to work through their suffering and regulate their emotion systems.

Compassion is a universal concept, but people understand it in many different ways. This research explored different religion's understanding of compassion, their compassionate figures, and where compassion work can fit in their religious practices. As servicemembers seek to deepen their knowledge of compassion work, they can improve their lives.

Three modules were created as a resource for chaplains to teach about compassion work and how servicemembers can employ it in their lives. The first module will teach about compassion in general. The second module will teach about how to cultivate compassion for self. The third module will teach about how to cultivate compassion for others. These modules will help servicemembers to bear their burdens in a more compassionate manner and live life with love for themselves and love for others.

Concept Model for Compassion Work



*The dashed line following "Evaluation" is intentionally placed to suggest that conducting compassion work does not lead to further suffering, rather, it is a depiction of life's flow of suffering. Compassion work can strengthen the person to cope better with future suffering. Chances are, future sources of suffering will be extrinsic rather than intrinsic due to the positive consequences of compassion work. This model is a conglomerate of a number of models. The Supporting Research section explores the ideas behind these models in depth. They include: Darcel Reyes' "Self-Compassion: A Concept Analysis." Her concept model was difficult for me to follow, and so I adapted my model from hers primarily. She created the terms "trigger, negative consequences, positive emotional responses, and positive consequences, and evaluation, which I have used in my model. Kristin Neff's Self-Compassion: The Proven Power of Being Kind to Yourself; Paul Gilbert and Pema Choden's Mindful Compassion which I referred to in my model as Compassion Work; Charles Zastrow's Talk to Yourself: Using the Power of Self-Talk which describes the process of suffering, early cognition and emotions which results in the need for self-talk; Karen Armstrong's Twelve Steps to a Compassionate Life; Alcoholics Anonymous Twelve Steps, and William R Miller and Stephen Rollnick's Motivational Interviewing: Helping People Change.

The Supporting Research section of this book follows this concept model. As compassion is meant to help with suffering, that

is the starting point to the model. As a person suffers they begin to think to themselves (early cognition) and their thoughts create strong emotions. The person must decide what to do with these emotions. If they decide to do nothing, they can have negative responses which result in negative consequences and thus to more suffering.

If the person is triggered into awareness of a better way to cope they can be led to positive responses. A person can be triggered by an intervention from close friends or a therapist, from hitting "rock bottom" if addicted, a spiritual awakening or a personal impression. One of the most positive responses to suffering and difficult emotions is compassion work which leads to positive emotional responses and consequences as covered by the supporting research. A person then must evaluate their experiences in order to prepare for other, eventual times of suffering in their lives.

As a practical example of this model let us consider someone who has a compulsion for drinking. When a person drinks, they may do so as a negative response to some difficult emotion or other sort of suffering. An event such as a fight with their spouse drives them through the process of early cognition resulting in strong emotions and triggers them to either respond negatively or positively. If they choose a negative response, that could entail drinking which only leads to negative consequences and back to further suffering.

If they choose a positive response, that could entail exercising compassion work. Through compassionate mindfulness exercises, they can realize where their desire for drinking comes from; the fight with their spouse. Through a process of cultivating self-kindness, exercising mindfulness, seeking wisdom, and understanding their common humanity, they can find more constructive ways to cope with their difficulties, such as seeking to work through the issue with their spouse in a compassionate manner rather than with raging tempers.

Thus, working through the difficult emotions in a positive response involving compassion work, rather than denying them through a negative response such as drinking, the person is able to cope in a healthy manner. Doing so results in positive emotional responses and consequences. The person will then need to evaluate their experience in order to prepare for another form of suffering that may come later. Doing so will allow them to understand what parts of compassion work helped them and how they can use it again in the future to avoid negative responses and consequences, and therefore, further suffering.

This model may be useful for chaplains to show when explaining where compassion work fits into everyday lives. It is simple enough that the chaplain should be able to draw it, or they may choose to print it out and give copies to the attendants.

The following provides an outline for how the three modules (What is Compassion, Compassion for Me, and Compassion for others) will be taught and facilitated.

General Module Outline

Class duration (1 - 1/2 hrs.)

Introduction (5 minutes)

A brief introduction should be done in class where the attendees can learn who each other is by name. Spend no more than 5 minutes with introductions.

Overview (5 minutes)

The chaplain will provide a brief overview of the subjects that will be covered in the module's instruction, discussion and exercises.

Instruction (about 15 minutes)

The instruction portion of each module will contain the basic subjects that will be talked about. ***Any specific dialogue that the chaplain should say will be shown in bold and italicized so the chaplain can easily see it.*** Dialogue and instruction can be adapted to the needs of the chaplain.

Other Topics if Time Permits

A number of additional topics will be listed in each module that can be taught if the chaplain needs to fill more time or to help the chaplain have more ideas of things he can instruct on for specific situations where he feels the basic instruction is understood quickly. Some of these topics may be more pertinent to the audience being taught and so the chaplain can decide to use them rather than the basic instruction.

Discussion (about 20 minutes)

This portion will be mainly unscripted. The chaplain should have a piece of paper ready to write down questions received during the instruction portion of the modules that can be covered in

the context of a group discussion. However, there will be a list of topics that should be discussed with the group. This will require the involvement of the entire class.

Other Topics if Time Permits

A number of additional topics will be listed in each module that can be discussed if the chaplain needs to fill more time or to help the chaplain have more ideas of things the class can discuss for specific situations where he feels the basic discussion is not sufficient. Some of these topics may be more pertinent to the flow of discussion and so the chaplain can decide to use them rather than the basic discussion.

Exercises (about 15 minutes)

This portion will have heavily scripted sections where the chaplain should follow the ***dialogue***. The chaplain can modify the dialogue to fit their own needs if they feel inclined to do so. These exercises will mainly be guided mindfulness and meditation sessions where the chaplain will be the guiding voice and should be read slowly. If the chaplain feels inclined to do so, they can find previously recorded meditations and play them instead of being the voice. Generally, the room in which the class is being held should be as quiet as possible in order to facilitate deep mental focus. If the class is more comfortable, they can lay down on the floor or remain sitting up in their chairs. The lights can be turned off, or the members of the class can close their eyes if they want to. The important thing is to be in a comfortable position to help facilitate mindfulness and meditation. Always allow for time to return to the moment of the "here and now" before finishing the class.

Other Exercises if Time Permits

A number of additional exercises will be listed in each module that can be done if the chaplain needs to fill more time or to help the chaplain have more ideas of things the class can do for specific

situations where he feels the basic exercises are not sufficient. Some of these exercises may be more pertinent to the needs of the class and so the chaplain can decide to use them rather than the basic exercises. Further exercises can be found online or in meditation books. If the chaplain feels inclined to do so, they can find previously recorded meditations and play them instead of being the voice. If the chaplain feels inclined, they can suggest those in attendance practice some of these other exercises in preparation for the next module.

Resources

While not a part of the class, a list of resources will be provided for each module. If the chaplain gets asked about the details of a class, this list of resources will offer locations to find answers to their questions.

Applications

A brief suggestion for adaptations of each module will be provided at the end each. These adaptations will be given in the context of the following possibilities for use:

During Deployment

The stresses of life are different for those operating in a theater of war. Thus, the class may need to be adapted to answer the questions of those in attendance or to assist with difficulties the chaplain has noticed in their units.

Post-deployment Reintegration

The stresses of life are different for those returning from a theater of war. Thus, the class may need to be adapted to answer the questions of those in attendance or to assist with the difficulties or reintegration the chaplain has noticed or has heard reported.

Possible Future Classes

A number of topics will be specified as possibilities of future classes the chaplain can create based on popular instruction, discussion, or exercises.

Module One

What is Compassion?

Overview

In this class, the understanding of compassion will be explored and explained in order to appeal to servicemembers to help them understand its importance in their lives and to create the desire to learn more about it. This will be done by understanding the basics of compassion work as well as the place that compassion has in our everyday lives and religious practices and understandings as covered in chapter two.

The class will also include a few exercises in order to create excitement and desire to learn more. This will be done by helping those in attendance to realize just how difficult it is to control one's thoughts in an exercise in attention. Another exercise, borrowed from Paul Gilbert and Pema Choden's book *Mindful Compassion*, will be conducted in which those in attendance will seek to envision a compassionate figure in order to seek to learn from it.

Instruction

After briefly going over what the module will be going over, the chaplain can begin the formal instruction portion of the class. The following three areas will be taught during the instruction block of the module: learning what the word compassion means, what compassion is in religious understandings or world views, and mindfulness.

Compassion Definition

The chaplain will go over what the word compassion means. During this block, the chaplain can engage in direct dialogue with members of the class to better get a feel for their preexisting beliefs about compassion. The chaplain can decide which elements of the supporting research they will go over, but should go over the following:

(Though this section is presented as direct dialogue, the chaplain does not need to read it, but should be familiar with these ideas to express them to the class)

> *Compassion is sometimes also referred to as altruism, particularly in the Buddhist tradition, which refers to regard for others rather than regard for self. This class will use the definition given by the creator of Compassion Focused Therapy: "being sensitive to the suffering of self and others with a deep commitment to try to prevent and relieve it." This definition constitutes being open to suffering, rather than shutting it out, and understanding and learning how to respond to it. Furthermore, it invites the ability to help others in their suffering as well. The word "compassion" comes from the Latin word compati which means to share with or suffer with. The term "compassion work" will be used and described in great detail in chapter two.*

The chaplain here should entertain some comments about what the class thinks about this definition. The point to make clear is that compassion is about awareness of suffering in others and acting to relieve it out of a motivation gained from the person's past experience with suffering themselves.

Compassion and Religion

The chaplain will then go over what compassion means for all religions. The point to make clear here is that every religion, to some extent, believes in and values compassion, and so it is a common point of connection among all members of the class, no matter what their background. The chaplain can ask members of the class what they have learned about compassion from their own faith traditions. In this way, the class will be educating each other. The chaplain can decide which elements of the supporting research they will cover, but should go over the following:

Every faith system has needed to find a way to explain and cope with these types of suffering. The question that many have brought up is why God allows such suffering in the world. Each religion has its own theodicy, or answer to this question. We will explore briefly the action response of a handful of faith traditions to the "theodical problem" which are embodied in compassion, or what many call The Golden Rule.

Karen Armstrong, a former religious sister in the Roman Catholic Church has made it her life's work to study the commonalities of all religions, specifically that of compassion. She went on to create the Charter for Compassion which calls "upon all men and women to restore compassion to the center of morality and religion." Having studied compassion for most of her life, Armstrong concluded that every world religion highlights the golden rule; compassion. It is the universal religious principle.

The golden rule is to do unto others as you would have them do unto you. This is the basis of compassionate understanding. Hidden within the golden rule is the understanding that in order to treat someone else the way you want to be treated, you must first know how you want to be treated. It then follows that you must treat yourself the way you want to be treated. And so, within the understanding of compassion and the golden rule lies the basis of compassion for others as well as for ourselves, the latter not being focused on as much, and so is one of the aspects we are seeking to improve in this module. Compassion ultimately comes from deity, and so we can model the way that compassion is shown by studying and seeking to emulate the holy.

Each tradition can generally understand the value of requesting compassion from God and using it to improve their lives. Requesting compassion can involve a person requesting that God have compassion on themselves or others, that they be able

to use God's compassion as a source of compassion for others, that they be able to better understand what compassion is, means, and how it works, or that they be able to receive God's sense of compassion for themselves to improve their own self-compassion or self-worth. Such compassion can help the person's experience with repentance, which in itself can be seen as a very self-compassionate act, or their general outlook on life and its struggles. Seeking greater self-compassion can even be a way to show love to God as a way of appreciating and respecting the gifts God gave you; your body, spirit, and self. And so, exploring possible figures, such as God could be beneficial.

Of course, each person's interpretation of a common religious figure will be different from another person's and so, one should be careful in cultivating their ideal compassionate figure. As a rule, the compassionate figure should have the following qualities: a wise mind, strength and fortitude, great warmth and kindness, and a non-judgmental attitude. The idea of the compassionate figure is to give your own compassionate self a goal to strive for, or a template to work with; a way to achieve the compassionate mind which will speak to the self-critic, the emotions, the suffering, etc.

The chaplain can again entertain thoughts or reactions to this discussion of the religious understanding of compassion. The point should be clear, though, that compassion is a religious or existential principle that everyone should value, for themselves and others, and it can be cultivated through mindfulness and meditation, particularly focused on holy, compassionate figures. This naturally leads to the next point of discussion.

Mindfulness

The chaplain will go over the importance and ability of imagery through mindfulness. This is meant to be the basis for helping

members of the class enhance their ability to use compassion in their lives as well as what compassion means to them. The chaplain can decide which elements of the supporting research they will go over, but should go over the following:

There is a bit of confusion about the distinction between meditation and mindfulness, and understandably so. An easy way to understand it is that meditation yields the ability to be mindful. In this way, meditation is like an exercise for the brain to increase one's mindfulness or ability to be aware of its own cognition. Mindfulness has been described as the ability to "hover calmly and objectively over our thoughts, feelings, and emotions and then take our time to respond" thus allowing "the executive brain to inhibit, organize, and modulate the hardwired automatic reactions preprogrammed into the emotional brain." In doing this, the idea is to focus on pain and difficult emotions, feelings or thoughts, which may seem counterintuitive, but it is vital "that we hold our experiences in balanced awareness, rather than ignoring our pain." Rather than intensifying suffering, "mindfulness transforms suffering into an opportunity for spiritual and psychological growth. This transformation results in an alignment of emotional and rational processes."

In simple terms, mindfulness has a way of rewiring the brain, and this can be done through repeated practice and meditation. In this way, mindfulness is about connecting the usually automatic brain to the body in order to create a better sync and thus increase autonomy. Many different meditation and mindfulness exercises have been created making it impossible to review all of them in this class. Meditation has been used by many practitioners of behavioral medicine, and in fact, "the whole field of behavioral medicine has been profoundly affected by meditative practice." However, it is beneficial to understand a few of the basic principles.

Dan Harris noted that it is important to remember that meditation and mindfulness "does not necessarily entail a lot of the weird stuff I feared it might." Mindfulness alone has been proven to be effective in many instances from: measurable decrease in various types of chronic physical pain, to a surprising relief that can come to those facing depression, anxiety, and eating disorders like anorexia and bulimia, to the cultivation of greater attentiveness for those who struggle to focus. There is even growing evidence that the cultivation of mindfulness, combined with other healthy activities, can literally change brain pathways.

General principles of mindfulness include resting, creating an anchor, also known as grounding, working with attention, and sense awareness. There are many different ways to follow and achieve these principles including online guided meditations, in-person meditation classes, or written instructions.

Resting involves finding a comfortable position and location free from distraction in order to facilitate maximum mental concentration and connection to one's body. Once the body is sufficiently at rest and the brain is beginning to be in tune with the body it is necessary to find a source of concentration. This is also known as creating an anchor, or grounding, which is usually done through breathing deliberately, and can increase your ability to remain calm. Studies show that focusing on breathing has been shown to have "enormous power to control your stress response."

Working with attention can be described as if we were in a dark room and we were to shine a flashlight around the room. The things we cannot see would still be there, but we would not be paying attention to them until the beam of the flashlight hits it. The same is true with mindfulness. We can shine our "spotlight" around the walls of our mind until we find something we want to explore or do not understand. Mindfulness draws its real power

from seeking to understand what we find. One way to do this is summarized as an exercise called "Name it to Tame it" where once an emotion is found it must be named and understood, and thus it can better be controlled. The importance of working with attention is evident in that many people do not have long attention spans and therefore we do not spend a lot of time working with the things that we really find distressing. In summary, mindfulness is a process of training and using the power of the brain to work with the body to find solutions to suffering.

The chaplain can say as much or as little of this as they want, but the important point to communicate is that mindfulness helps in the cultivation of compassion in one's life and this is done through concentrated effort on the way one thinks and focuses. Furthermore, the effort of concentrating through mindfulness can help the brain to "rewire" itself to think more constructively in the future.

Other Topics if Time Permits

- The difference between passion and compassion.
- Self-esteem vs. Self-compassion, why self-esteem can cause egoism, and compassion does not.
- Compassionate mindfulness is not simply positive thinking.
- We need to sit with difficult emotions to understand them and know constructive things to do with them.

Discussion

The following discussion questions are intended to spur conversation among the group. Encourage attendants to respond to each other and discuss things among themselves. If conversation is slow, each question has a few follow up questions. If the instruction portion creates positive conversation, use it rather than using these

discussion points. Possible questions for dialogue:

Question One

Is compassion an important principle to you? What do you look for in a compassionate figure? What do you want to learn more about compassion?

Question Two

What do you feel that compassion for others and for yourself can do for you? Would you share something difficult going on in your life right now that you feel focusing on compassion could help you to cope with? How can we accept ourselves with compassion?

Other Topics of Questions if Time Permits:

- What is the difference between pity, sympathy, empathy, and compassion? (Suggestion: each of these words are levels of feeling increasing in the amount of action it requires from the person who feels it.)
- What do you think of when you hear "mindfulness or meditation?" (Suggest to the class that meditation does not necessarily entail a lot of weird stuff some fear it might.)
- Why should we do mind training? Why do we do PT? (Suggest to the class that we do it so that we can do our jobs better by being more compassionate people and putting our desires to help others into action. We need to help ourselves too. We need to train the mind how to do this.)

Exercises

The following exercises are intended to help the attendants put into practice a few of the things introduced in the class. The chaplain can do both and have small discussions about each of them, or they

can choose to do one.

Exercise One

Attention Training (Adapted from "Exercise One: Recognizing the Unsettled Mind" from Paul Gilbert and Pema Choden's book *Mindful Compassion*, page 187)

This exercise is intended to show class members how difficult it can be to control the mind and the constant thoughts that course through our minds. The chaplain can ask the class after the exercise what some of the difficulties were that the attendants faced. Some may find it helpful to preface this exercise with a simple 1-minute moment of complete silence to show the value of space, silence, and calmness. The following script should be read slowly, one sentence at a time, but should not take more than 5 minutes to read through.

> *Sit comfortably with your back straight. Simply relax, with your eyes open if possible, and experience being where you are. Feel the pressure of your body resting on the seat and ground; become aware of sights, sounds, and other sensory stimuli.*
>
> *This practice is very simple: just allow yourself to be present, experiencing whatever happens when you sit and do nothing. Decide to sit and do nothing. Let your mind rest in the present moment, and simply be aware of where you are right now.*
>
> *In a surprisingly short amount of time you may find that you are thinking about something, even though you had decided to do nothing other that notice what occurs in your senses in this moment. When you realize you are "thinking," simply bring your attention back to being "here," doing nothing, just observing. Once again, before you know it, you may have drifted off into random thoughts, worries, daydreams, or ruminations. So once again, when you realize this, kindly and gently bring your attention*

back to being here, doing nothing.

At this point, the chaplain should have the class bring their attention to the class again by saying the following:

Now bring your mind into this room again and take three deep breaths with me. One. Sitting naturally. Two. Opening your eyes. Three. The mind back to our class. Stretch and move your body a little bit.

Pause for a moment to let the class resituate themselves then have a brief discussion about the challenge of keeping the mind from thinking. Ask them what kinds of thoughts went through their minds and if they started to get frustrated. Ask what it was like to realize they're not as in control of their thoughts as they had believed. Express to them the need for patience in mindfulness.

Exercise Two

Compassionate Figure (Adapted from "Exercise Ten: Compassionate Image" from Paul Gilbert and Pema Choden's book *Mindful Compassion*, page 245)

This exercise is intended to help the class create a figure of compassion which can instruct them on how to have more compassion for themselves. A few things the chaplain could suggest is to think about a safe place where they can go in their minds to meet this compassionate figure. Ask them to consider what their surroundings look like and what color the idea of compassion is. The following exercise should not go longer that 10 minutes.

Settle into a posture that is comfortable yet alert. Gently close your eyes or allow your gaze to fall unfocused on the floor. Create a gentle facial expression of friendliness as if you are with somebody you like. Try relaxing your facial muscles by letting your jaw drop slightly, and then let your mouth turn up into a slight smile.

Now focus on your breathing, on the air coming in through your nose and down into your diaphragm, staying a short while, and then moving back out through your nose. Notice how your diaphragm moves gently as you breathe in and out. You should be breathing slightly more slowly and slightly more deeply than you normally would. The in breath is about three to five seconds, and then you pause momentarily and take three to five seconds for the out breath. It should be a comfortable breath. Notice how your body responds to your breathing, as if you are linking up with a rhythm within your body that is soothing and calming for you. Notice how you might feel heavier as you sit, more solid, and still in your body.

You may find that thoughts pop into your mind, which is totally find and natural. Don't worry about it. You are not attempting to get rid of thoughts or make your mind go blank. You are not doing anything besides focusing on the soothing breathing rhythm and not becoming involved with the thoughts that pop into your mind. You let them go free without attempting to suppress or become involved with them.

Check again on your friendly facial expression, the gentle smile, and then continue to experience your soothing breathing rhythm. Tune in to the feeling of slowing down. As your mind settles, consider what qualities your compassionate figure has: maybe complete acceptance of you no matter what; or maybe your compassionate figure has a deep concern and affection for you; or a sense of kinship and belonging. Your compassionate figure should be ideal for you. Sometimes we may try to hide or suppress our feelings and fantasies, but our ideal compassionate figure understands this struggle because it is so much part of being human. You can imagine your compassionate figure as always wanting to help you become more compassionate toward yourself

and others, and never criticizing you.

With this compassionate figure in mind, focus on what your figure looks like. Is it old or young? Is it male or female, or perhaps even nonhuman, such as an animal, the sea, or light? What would your compassionate figure sound like? If it was to communicate with you what would its tone of voice be like? What are its facial expressions? Notice how it might smile at you or show concern for you. Are there any colors that are associated with it?

It can be helpful to bring to mind a safe place and imagine that you meet your compassionate figure there. Imagine that it is coming toward you – it is coming to meet you, and you are going toward it. You can sense its pleasure in seeing you. Then imagine it either standing in front of you or sitting close to you. Focus on the presence of this ideal compassionate image and the sense of it being with you.

Focus on the sense of kindness and warmth that you feel emanating from this figure. Tune in your own compassionate facial expression and imagine affectionate feelings while in the company of this figure. Imagine feeling completely safe with this figure. Notice what feelings are in you as you imagine these things.

Focus on the figure's maturity, authority, and confidence. It is not overwhelmed by your pain or distress; and it is not put off by the strange things that go through your mind, but it may transmit the understanding that you have a complex mind that gives rise to these things. Imagine being with this compassionate figure and feeling its great wisdom which has come from its life path and experience. This wisdom creates a deep desire to be helpful and supportive. Imagine its wisdom enabling it to truly understand the struggles that you go through in life – your hopes and fears. It offers wisdom to you. Spend a few moments imagining being with

your ideal compassionate figure and feeling this great wisdom enfolding you.

Now imagine your compassionate figure saying the following words to you in as kind and warm a voice as you can imagine, and with a full commitment to you:

- *May you be free of suffering, say your name in your mind.*
- *May you be happy, say your name in your mind.*
- *May you flourish, say your name in your mind.*
- *May you find peace, joy, and well-being, say your name in your mind.*

Imagine your compassionate image looking at you with deep, heartfelt kindness and saying these things, genuinely wishing them to be true.

Now begin to let your compassionate figure fade. Remember that this is your own imagination at work: you are calling on your inner capacity for compassion. These feelings and this figure are always accessible to you at any time because they are a part of you and they have come from you. As you learn to notice them and focus on them, they can be called upon at any time.

At this point, the chaplain should have the class bring their attention to the class again by saying the following:

Now bring your mind into this room again and take three deep breaths with me. One. Sitting naturally. Two. Opening your eyes. Three. The mind back to our class. Stretch and move your body a little bit.

Chaplain: Pause for a moment to let the class resituate themselves then have a brief discussion about the class's experience with their

compassionate figures. Suggest to the class that they can use this meditation for when they are about to pray, if they believe in prayer. Thank the class for their participation and at this time, the module is over and the class is free to leave. Ask the class to think about these exercises until the next time they meet for module two and briefly talk about what module two will entail.

Eventually, this sort of meditation should lead to the creation of a "compassionate self" where they make a version of themselves who embodies the ideals of the compassionate figure here created as a separate voice that can help them cope with their own inner voices.

Other Exercises if Time Permits

- Eating an almond, or an apple. See Paul Gilbert and Pema Choden's *Mindful Compassion*, page 196-197.
- Mister Roger's 1 minute of gratitude:

So many people have helped you to come to be where you are. Some of them are near, some are far away and some are even in Heaven. All of us have special ones who have loved us into being. Would you just take, along with me, 1 minute to think of the people who have helped you become who you are, those who have cared about you and wanted what was best for you in life. 1 minute of silence, I'll watch the time… Whomever you've been thinking about, how pleased they must be to know the difference you feel they have made.

Resources

There are a number of very helpful resources available for those who would like to learn more about how to engage compassion and mindfulness in their lives. There are mindfulness apps, mindful writing tutorials online, as well as ideas for how to take mindful nature walks. The important thing is to stress the ability to take time throughout the

day to just be silent and consider the way the mind works and how to be more compassionate.

Another possible resource for those who want to build their compassion can purchase Karen Armstrong's *Twelve Steps to a Compassionate Life.* Instructional or reading club materials are available for this book at *charterforcompassion.org* and could be a great resource for chaplains.

Applications

During Deployment

While deployed, the idea of compassion can be a very foreign subject in the minds of those serving. Thus, the chaplain may need to plan ways to talk about the importance of compassion as a way to cope with the stresses of combat, being away from home and family, or the other situations they find they are faced with. The chaplain may need to argue for the importance of compassion in life a bit more with this group.

Furthermore, the chaplain may decide to spend more time instructing mindfulness exercises to help servicemembers with their stresses. Again, using mindfulness can be a very foreign subject in the minds of those serving. The Supporting Research section of this book can help to explore how mindfulness can fit into a military lifestyle and be beneficial.

Post-deployment Reintegration

When returning from deployment those who have served for extended amounts of time may find returning home to be a difficult task. They may need to learn how to be a calmer person again and how to be with their families. They may even find they need their compassionate figures now more than ever in their lives. The chaplain can help these individuals by stressing and expanding sections of

the module. They may even find that they have a hard time calming themselves down each day, and so practicing meditation may be another point that the chaplain can stress depending on the needs of those who attend the classes. The important part of this reintegration is getting the servicemember to peacefully and happily return to their families.

Possible Future Classes:

- Compassion in specific religions.
- The Golden Rule
- Evolution and the need for compassion.
- Having compassion in a heartless and faithless environment.
- Mindfulness for the fatigued.

Module Two

Compassion for Me

Overview

This class will build upon the understanding of compassion gained from class one. It will explore the needs we have to be more compassionate to ourselves and how we can do that through compassion work as described in chapter two. Elements that were not deeply covered in chapter one will be explored in a deeper way in this class.

The class will include a few exercises, borrowed from Paul Gilbert and Pema Choden's book *Mindful Compassion*, to model how to cultivate compassion for one's self through mindfulness exercises. Those in attendance will be taught more about the emotion systems and instructed to explore which systems they spend the most time in. The class will end by teaching them the mindfulness exercise for accessing a compassionate mindset and creating a compassionate self.

Instruction

After briefly going over what the module will be going over, the chaplain can begin the formal instruction portion of the class. The basics of compassion work, found in the Supporting Research section of this book, will be taught during the instruction block of the module: Self-kindness, mindfulness (briefly), wisdom, and common humanity. These will be used to learn how to create and access the "compassionate self."

Self-kindness

Particularly important to this block of instruction is knowing how to be kind to ourselves. The chaplain can decide which elements of the supporting research they will go over, but should go over the following:

Many times, we can be our own worst critics. There is an insatiable voice in each person's head which criticizes their choices and actions for not living up to their own expectations. The ability to silence the critic within is vital so "that we be gentle and understanding with ourselves rather than harshly critical" or even hateful. Self-kindness is not a selfish act of indulgence, rather, it is a process of giving yourself what you really need. By demonstrating kindness to ourselves we can train our brains to be kind rather than critical. "Self-kindness functions as the 'reciprocal golden rule,' one treats oneself with the compassion usually reserved for others." This is possible because "humans are biologically designed to respond to kindness; we have specific brain systems that are designed for giving and receiving kindness."

Of course, it can be difficult to be kind to ourselves when our automatic response has always been to criticize. Changing our inner dialogue can be tricky, but, with the power of mindfulness, a person can change their critical self-talk. This can be done by asking ourselves, mindfully, what lies behind our criticism. If we tune into what the critical emotion is saying, we can find the motivation behind it; a drive to achieve which was not satisfied.

It is important to exercise self-kindness as "an objective analysis of suffering, extending caring and understanding toward self" which is done by "accept(ing) one's flaws, releasing regrets, disappointments, and illusions about the way 'things could have been.'" The releasing of these emotions and this suffering is a type of self-forgiveness which must be coupled with taking responsibility for one's actions. Sometimes it can be helpful to imagine what a kind friend would say, and to repeat that to yourself. However, self-kindness requires honesty and a "willingness to take responsibility for actions that may have resulted in suffering without penance, guilt, or punishment for the behavior." Self-

punishment for mistakes will not solve any problems, however, mindful understanding and action will help solve problem.

It is important to remember that life is not meant to be a battle with ourselves or with others, rather, it is about choosing how we react to difficulties that come up in our lives. Furthermore, it can be beneficial to talk about how a key part in helping others is facilitating your own ability to help yourself. You will not be able to help others if you are not well. Think about how we are instructed to apply airplane oxygen masks; first to ourselves, and then to others. If you are suffering, it can be very difficult to help others to the best of your ability. Thus, we must access our compassionate self to show love for ourselves. This is done through mindfulness.

The chaplain here can entertain some comments about what the class thinks about self-kindness and answer possible questions. The point to make clear is that self-kindness is about awareness of our own suffering and acting to relieve it.

Mindfulness

The chaplain can decide how to talk about this again, as he has already instructed the main part of it during the class prior to this. The important thing to communicate in this section is that mindfulness helps us to be aware of our mental state and, when done correctly, helps us to accept our feelings without judgement. The chaplain can decide which elements of the supporting research they will go over, but should go over the following:

Cultivating the compassionate self through mindfulness requires commitment and work. Each person has a side of themselves that is compassionate, though it may be very small. Cultivating and exploring a person's compassionate self may involve focusing on the mind, compassionate imagery, a safe place, a compassionate

color and other exercises similar to the ones we did during the first module. The compassionate self becomes a new voice in the mind of the person meditating and is used to speak to the persons emotions and critical voices.

If a computer is accessible, it will be beneficial to show the video "Compassion for Voices: a tale of courage and hope" published by King's Cultural Community found on YouTube (5:13). (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VRqI4lxuXAw) The emotion systems are an important point to make and are shown very clearly in this video.

Wisdom

As stated above, the emotion systems are important to understand how self-compassion can help us. In order to understand the emotion systems, it is helpful to realize how the brain works and why we have to deal with difficult emotions. The chaplain can decide which elements of the supporting research they will go over, but should go over the following:

In the context of compassion work, a person who has wisdom "acknowledges the internal experience of suffering" and then turns their attention to alleviating that suffering which "results in skillful actions." Paul Gilbert speaks of wisdom as the ability of a person to understand that they were born with an evolved "tricky brain" which is difficult to understand and work with, and which is not their fault for having, but is their responsibility to cope with. The human brain is a wise brain which has the "ability to evaluate one's behavior, understanding the positive and negative factors that influence one's actions."

Such factors include one's inherited genes, the environment they live in, or the brain that we are born with; one that is "tricky." Having wisdom involves evaluating the positive and negative factors that have led to one's actions to understand where those

factors came from and how to deal with them in the future. It also involves cultivating realistic vision and insight about one's behaviors that may compound or cause suffering. Finally, wisdom involves developing an attitude free of judgement for one's self and realizing that self-judgement leads to disconnection from the self and others. Each of these aspects of wisdom combine to create a better vision of the world and circumstances that each of us find ourselves in. Such wisdom helps us to avoid identifying too much with our mistakes or suffering to the point where we become linked to them. Once we have understood these things, then the work begins on how to deal with them in healthy manners rather than damaging ways.

At this point, the chaplain can transition to discussing the three emotion systems.

Everyone has the potential to feel intense emotions. These emotions fall into one of three systems; threat, drive, or soothe. Refer to the video. These emotion systems were evolutionarily important and so continue to survive in our minds today. The threat system "helps us detect and respond to threats and harms. It is the source of emotions like fear, anxiety, anger, jealousy, and disgust." These emotions help to alert us of danger. For example, if we are feeling anxious it may be because something has frightened us. This is where many servicemembers tend to stay while they are deployed. They live in a constant state of stress, what has been described as "condition yellow," where warriors "must strive to exist" at all times "ready to play, fight, frolic, mate or run. They are survivors." Upon returning home from deployment it is possible that the warrior lived in the threat system long enough that the begin to experience symptoms of PTSD.

The drive system "helps us detect, be interested in, and take pleasure in securing important resources that help us survive and

prosper… it is the source of emotions like excitement and pleasure." These emotions are intended to help us to seek and thrive in our fast-pace lives. Without our drives, we may be apt to sit around the house all day and do nothing. Again, a servicemember will tend to dwell in the drive system along with the threat system. Doing so will keep him aware and prepared. Members of the Armed Forces are trained to be driven and motivated to accomplish a mission.

The soothe system "is linked to feelings of contentment in situations where we are not threatened or driven to get things we want. It is a source of emotions such as peaceful well-being, contentment, safeness, and feeling connected." Such emotions are not very high on the priority list of many people in the world we live in today; we seldom hear people saying "slow down and relax," rather we are pushed to go faster and be stronger. Servicemembers will tend to disregard the soothe system or soothe themselves in unconstructive ways such as video games. If they learn to tap into their soothing system they will be better prepared to fight their battles. As former West Point Psychology Professor, Dave Grossman stated: "managing daily stress is vitally important because we are continuously bombarded with it. Life-and-death, combat incidents are comparatively rare, but when they do occur, managing the emotional, physiological crisis after the event can be even more important." Many warriors attempt to find loopholes around their soothing system requirements such as caffeine, nicotine, etc. Nevertheless, spending time in the soothe system is vital to mental well-being.

Generally, when someone is overwhelmed with these sorts of emotions they will either attempt to smother them, or they will act out in some sort of irrational and unhealthy manner which can create addictive behaviors. When someone ignores or does not acknowledge their emotions or does something unhealthy

they can be overwhelmed with shame which can only make the suffering worse. It is a hard fact of life that we live with brains that are "full of conflicting motives, desires, and emotions that often don't work well together. This is one reason we are so susceptible to anxiety, depression, rages, and paranoia," not to mention unhealthy behaviors.

Common Humanity

The chaplain should decide how to talk about this, as he will instruct the main part of it during the class following this. The important thing to communicate in this section is that no one is free from suffering of some kind, and that should be a source of comfort. It is imperative to remember that every living person is a member of humanity, and not someone to be objectified or demonized. The chaplain can decide which elements of the supporting research they will go over, but should go over the following:

> Some could consider this to be a facet of wisdom; realizing that our problems are not our own, but that we share many of the same difficulties in our lives. So often, "the tendency of humans is to think that suffering is a solitary experience. This illusion of separateness intensifies the experience of suffering." In reality, no one is free from suffering of some sort or another. The realization that the difficulties we go through in our daily lives are common to all is interestingly freeing. Where the common reaction for many in hard times is to seek isolation, reaching out to others who have also gone through hard times invites compassion from others towards ourselves and helps us to know what we can do to overcome our challenges. Thus, common humanity "provides a sense of belonging that replaces feelings of isolation."

Other Topics if Time Permits:

- Letting God be your therapist through prayer and meditation,

teaching you how to be more kind to yourself.

- Addictions and unhealthy behaviors used for coping; pornography, video gaming, alcoholism, overeating, etc.

Discussion

The following discussion questions are intended to spur conversation among the group. Encourage attendants to respond to each other and discuss things among themselves. If conversation is slow, each question has a few follow up questions. If the instruction portion creates positive conversation, use it rather than using these discussion points.

Question One

Consider the three threat systems. Now think of each as a separate circle; a red circle for threat, a blue circle for drive, and a green circle for soothe (like the video showed). Which of the emotion circles do they fall in most of the time? It can be more than one. Which would you like to spend more time in? How are each of these systems important to you?

Question Two

Consider a time when someone noticed something you did and had more compassion for you than you had for yourself at the time. How often are we more compassionate with others than we are with ourselves? What do you think to yourself when something embarrassing happens to you? And reversing the question can be interesting: What do you think to yourself when something embarrassing happens to someone else? How often do you notice the small things you don't like about yourself in others?

Other Topics if Time Permits:

- Self-compassion and assertiveness; can you still be a driven

person even if you're compassionate toward yourself?

- During the first class, how was it hearing that other people are suffering? Did it help you realize and understand that you're not broke or weird? Can you see yourself as part of common humanity?

Exercises

The following exercises are intended to help the attendants put into practice a few of the things introduced in the class. The chaplain can do both and have small discussions about each of them, or they can choose to do one and make it longer.

Exercise One

Our Desire for Happiness (Adapted from "Exercise 11: Recognizing Our Wish to be Happy" from Paul Gilbert and Pema Choden's book *Mindful Compassion,* page 248 to 249)

This exercise is intended to show class members their deep wishes for happiness in their lives. Sometimes it is important to reflect on our wishes for happiness because we can get so caught up in negative self-talk and self-criticism that we forget that we need to work and have to put forth efforts to be happy.

Settle into a posture that is comfortable yet alert. Gently close your eyes or allow your gaze to fall unfocused on the floor. Create a gentle facial expression of friendliness as if you are with somebody you like. Try relaxing your facial muscles by letting your jaw drop slightly, and then let your mouth turn up into a slight smile.

Now focus on your breathing, on the air coming in through your nose and down into your diaphragm, staying a short while, and then moving back out through your nose. Notice how your diaphragm moves gently as you breathe in and out. You should be

breathing slightly more slowly and slightly more deeply than you normally would. The in breath is about three to five seconds, and then you pause momentarily and take three to five seconds for the out breath. It should be a comfortable breath. Notice how your body responds to your breathing, as if you are linking up with a rhythm within your body that is soothing and calming for you. Notice how you might feel heavier as you sit, more solid, and still in your body.

You may find that thoughts pop into your mind, which is totally find and natural. Don't worry about it. You are not attempting to get rid of thoughts or make your mind go blank. You are not doing anything besides focusing on the soothing breathing rhythm and not becoming involved with the thoughts that pop into your mind. You let them go free without attempting to suppress or become involved with them.

Check again on your friendly facial expression, the gentle smile, and then continue to experience your soothing breathing rhythm. Tune in to the feeling of slowing down. As your mind settles, ask yourself the following questions:

What am I looking for in life?

If I was lying on my deathbed and reflecting back on my life, what would I have cherished and hoped to have found?

What would I have truly valued?

It may be useful to drop these questions into your mind without looking for a particular answer. It is like dropping a pebble into a very deep well. Just drop the question in and leave it alone. Then let your mind respond in its own language and in its own time.

If you find that the responses to these questions are superficial and relate only to sensory pleasure and the accumulation of material

possessions, then drop the questions in again. See if you can uncover an inner yearning that conveys a genuine sense of well-being – something that rises up from a place deep within you, and which might express itself in a variety of ways.

Acknowledge this aspiration for genuine happiness – for meaning, wholeness, inner peace, fulfillment – as a fundamental aspect of who you are. Recognize that this concern for your own welfare lies at the very core of your being, and simply acknowledge its presence within you.

And then, with a firm recognition of this yearning for happiness as an essential part of your being, repeat the following phrases on the out-breath:

- *In. Out. May I be free of suffering.*
- *In. Out. May I be happy.*
- *In. Out. May I flourish.*
- *In. Out. May I find peace, joy, and well-being. Pause*

Now bring your mind into this room again and take three deep breaths with me. One. Sitting naturally. Two. Opening your eyes. Three. The mind back to our class. Stretch and move your body a little bit.

Chaplain: Pause for a moment to let the class resituate themselves then have a brief discussion about their feelings during the exercise. Ask them what kinds of thoughts went through their minds and if they discovered something new, or a desire to be happy they had not known. Tell the class that realizing that they want to be happy will help them to create and maintain their compassionate selves.

Exercise Two

The Compassionate Self (Adapted from "Exercise 12: Compassionate Self" from Paul Gilbert and Pema Choden's book *Mindful Compassion,* pages 258 to 260)

This exercise is intended to teach and help class members how to access their compassionate selves. The compassionate self is the voice of compassion that lives inside everyone and is educated by our compassionate figures. Generally, the compassionate self is the voice that compels us to help others and be empathetic. We do not tend to be in the mode of the compassionate self when we are thinking about ourselves.

Settle back into a posture that is comfortable yet alert. Gently close your eyes or allow your gaze to fall unfocused on the floor. Create a gentle facial expression of friendliness. Relax your facial muscles and then let your mouth turn up into a slight smile.

Now focus on your breathing, on the air coming in through your nose and down into your diaphragm, staying a short while, and then moving back out through your nose. Notice how your diaphragm moves gently as you breathe in and out. It should be a comfortable breath. Notice how your body responds to your breathing, as if you are linking up with a rhythm within your body that is soothing and calming for you. Notice how you might feel heavier as you sit, more solid, and still in your body.

You may find that thoughts pop into your mind, which is totally find and natural. Don't worry about it. You are not attempting to get rid of thoughts or make your mind go blank. You are not doing anything besides focusing on the soothing breathing rhythm and not becoming involved with the thoughts that pop into your mind. You let them go free without attempting to suppress or become involved with them.

Check again on your friendly facial expression, the gentle smile, and then continue to experience your soothing breathing rhythm. Tune in to the feeling of slowing down. Notice the feeling of your body slowing back down.

Now, like an actor getting into a role, you are going to use your imagination to create an image of yourself at your compassionate best. Sometimes it can help to bring to mind a memory of when you felt very compassionate toward somebody. Recall what was going through your mind, the feelings of kindness and warmth, and your genuine wish for the person to get better or do well. It's important to focus on your compassionate feelings and not the distress that the other person might have been feeling.

Next, reflect for a few moments about the qualities you would like to have if you were to develop your compassion more fully. It doesn't matter if you don't feel as if you are a very compassionate person; the most important thing is to imagine the qualities of a deeply compassionate person and imagine what it might feel like if you did have them.

Now we're going to focus on the specific qualities of compassion. Start by imagining that you have wisdom. Bring to mind your understanding that all of us just find ourselves here in the flow of your own lives – so many complex factors have shaped who we have become, and so much of what has happened is beyond our control. See the wisdom of no blame and the value of seeing things clearly and choosing to be compassionate. Recognize that you have this wisdom right now – it is present within your life experience as a rich resource. Hold on to your friendly facial expression and consider your warm voice tone, imaging yourself expressing wisdom as you speak. For the next few moments, imagine yourself being a wise and insightful person – open, thoughtful, and reflective.

Next, imagine that from your wisdom comes a sense of authority, strength, and confidence. Connect to the sense of your own inner authority and dignity in your body posture. Tune in to your posture, your sense of solidness from your soothing breathing rhythm, and allow yourself to be held – body like a mountain, breath like a gentle breeze, and mind like the open sky. Draw strength from the fact that the vastness of the earth hold and supports you. Notice how you feel when you imagine yourself embodying authority and confidence. While holding your friendly facial expression and your warm voice tone, for the next few moments, think about how you would speak in a compassionate way with authority, how you would move the world, and how you would express this confidence, maturity, and authority.

Now, on the basis of this confidence, authority and wisdom, focus on your desire to be helpful and supportive and your wish for others to be free from suffering and the causes of suffering, to be happy and prosper. Hold your friendly facial expression and consider your voice tone and how you would speak in a compassionate way with kindness. Then become aware of any areas of tension or physical pain or emotional reaction to that tension within you and gently soften around these areas, holding them with kindness. Remember that your wisdom and strength are there as a support if things feel difficult. And so, for the next few moments, gently and playfully imagine that you have great kindness and the desire to be helpful. Notice how there is a certain calmness that comes with kindness and also a positive pleasurable feeling; it doesn't have that frenetic feeling of being agitated or frustrated. Notice how you feel when you imagine having these feelings within you.

And now, on the basis of your wisdom, strength, and kindness, imagine that you have the courage to face and work through the difficult experiences that may arise. You are willing to move

toward what is difficult, without blaming or criticizing, and you are willing to take responsibility for your life. For a few moments, imagine that you are such a person, someone who is deeply committed and responsible for working with your own mind.

Now imagine that you are looking at yourself from the outside. See your facial expressions, the way you move in the world, and note your motivations to be thoughtful, kind, and wise. Hear yourself speaking to people and note the compassionate tone in your voice. See other people relating to you as a compassionate person and see yourself relating to other people in a compassionate way. For the next few moments, playfully watch yourself as a compassionate person in the world and others relating to you as such.

The more you practice slowing down and imagining being this kind of person in the world, the more easily you may find you can access these qualities in you, and the more easily you will find they can express themselves through you. And now, as a way of concluding this exercise, let go of trying to visualize and for a few moments, rest without focusing on anything in particular.Now bring your mind into this room again and take three deep breaths with me. One. Sitting naturally. Two. Opening your eyes. Three. The mind back to our class. Stretch and move your body a little bit.

Chaplain: Pause for a moment to let the class resituate themselves then have a brief discussion about the class's experience with their compassionate figures. Suggest to the class that they can use this meditation for when they are having particularly difficult or stressful days. Thank the class for their participation and at this time, the module is over and the class is free to leave. Ask the class to think about these exercises until the next time they meet for module three and briefly talk about what module three will entail.

Other Exercises if Time Permits

- Exercises 14 through 17 of Paul Gilbert and Pema Choden's book *Mindful Compassion* titled "Compassion for Self," "Compassion for the Anxious Self," "Compassion for the Angry Self," and "Compassion for the Critical Self" pages 264 to 273.
- Walking around and communicating with others in the persona of the compassionate self.
- Is it hard to notice some of your own personal failings without belittling yourself? Try talking about them with the class or a partner without demeaning or belittling yourself. If the class or your partner hears negative self-talk or self-deprecating speech, they can call the class member out.
- Create flashcards with thoughts, quotes, or ideas that can comfort you when you need compassion. This could also be something the chaplain can give as "homework."
- Look in the mirror and notice if you hear any critical thoughts or voices that come up when you look at yourself. Close your eyes and imagine yourself as a person who has deep compassion for yourself and others. Contemplate the compassionate figure from the first module as a model for this compassionate self. Open your eyes and look at yourself with compassion. Imagine what this compassionate self would say to you. This could also be something the chaplain can give as "homework."
- When you're being hard on yourself about a mistake or failure, write a letter to a loved one in your life as though the mistake or failure where theirs. What would you say to that person? Apply to yourself the affirming words you write. This can be

done in class, or it could also be something the chaplain can give as "homework."

Resources

There are a number of very helpful resources available for those who would like to learn more about how to engage compassion and mindfulness in their lives. There are mindfulness apps, mindful writing tutorials online, as well as ideas for how to take mindful nature walks. Participating in these sorts of activities with these modules in mind can be very beneficial. The important thing is to stress the ability to take time throughout the day to just be silent and consider the way the mind works and how to be more compassionate.

Another possible resource for those who want to build their compassion can purchase Kristin Neff's *Self-Compassion.* Instructional or reading club materials are available for this book at self-compassion.org and could be a great resource for chaplains.

Applications

During Deployment

Exploring the three emotion systems during deployment could be a powerful discussion or class. The chaplain could spend most of his time talking about these and how to cope with them. As the module states above, many who are deployed could tend to be in the treat and drive system most of the time during a deployment. Furthermore, when faced with the difficulties of deployment, engaging with the compassionate self can be a powerful coping mechanism.

Post-deployment Reintegration

For those who are returning home, the three emotion systems can be an important and powerful concept, particularly when servicemembers are having difficulties staying out of the treat system once there is

no longer a treat. Furthermore, when faced with the difficulties of returning from deployment, engaging with the compassionate self can be a powerful coping mechanism.

Possible Future Classes:

- A class on the three emotion systems.
- Self-talk and how to use it or be abused by it.
- The evolutionary understanding of how the mind works and can be destructive and "tricky."
- Coping with addictions, losses, crises, distress, or other perplexities with compassion and engaging the compassionate self.

Module Three

Compassion for Others

Overview

This class will explore how compassion can help in our everyday relationships, particularly with our families and loved ones in order to maintain them. It will explore some of the ways that acting with compassion for others can help or has helped those in attendance to understand others and work with them. It will also explore the way in which compassion can fit in how servicemembers can better work and relate to those with whom they work.

The class will include exercises, borrowed from Paul Gilbert and Pema Choden's book *Mindful Compassion*, intended to help those in attendance see those with whom they work and relate in the context of common humanity and how they can achieve a mindset through mindfulness in which they can be compassionate to all. This is a meditation activity in which they will learn to see others and think about their suffering while seeking to take it away from them and give them goodness and peace instead.

Instruction

After briefly going over what the module will be going over, the chaplain can begin the formal instruction portion of the class. The importance of compassion in relation to others will be taught during the instruction block of the module: a brief discussion of common humanity, various situations where compassion can work, the sheepdog mentality of servicemembers, and a summary of all the modules.

Common Humanity

The chaplain can decide how to talk about this again, as he has already instructed the main part of it during the class prior to this. The important thing to communicate in this section is that understanding

that we are all part of common humanity helps us to be aware of our part in society and the roles we play as well as the power we have. The chaplain can decide which elements of the supporting research they will go over, but should go over the following:

> *Common humanity involves "feeling connected with others in the experience of life." A feeling of connection can help to break free of isolation which can compound suffering. Many times, people will withdraw from society out of embarrassment or out of a sense of their need to gain autonomy over their lives by taking control of their situations by themselves. In reality, looking outward and seeking humanity, relationships, and community is where true solutions can be found: "restoring relationships and community is central to restoring well-being." Understanding common humanity not only helps one to feel less isolated and better about their situations, it also "promotes a willingness to assist others who are suffering." This creates an upward spiral of service. Helping others relieves a person's ill feelings towards themselves as they feel they made a difference in someone else's life.*

Compassion for others, in this way, results in self-compassion. All of the parts are connected. The chaplain here can entertain some comments about what the class thinks about the idea of common humanity and answer possible questions. The point to make clear is that common humanity is about awareness of our position in the large human family who all experience many similar situations and suffering.

Sheepdogs

The chaplain can help the members of the class realize that they are already very compassionate people by explaining the concept of sheepdogs to them as discussed in the **Supporting Research**. This is done in the hope that members of the Armed Forces will realize

that compassion is not a soft attribute. The chaplain can decide which elements of the supporting research they will go over, but should go over the following:

Warriors have described themselves as "compassionate and violent; we are humane and animalistic; we are protectors and killers." Compassion can be the drive behind a military member's desire to fight and serve. Such a desire comes from a motive to protect and care for others, their families, the freedoms they enjoy in the nation, the cause of peace and liberty, their religious beliefs and freedoms and their fellowman. In that, all service members are compassionate. Colonel Dave Grossman describes this as a sheepdog mentality.

Grossman postulates that there are three types of people in the world: sheep, wolves, and sheepdogs. Sheep are the common, everyday citizens that do not want to get into or cause trouble nor acknowledge that trouble exists. Wolves are the sorts of people that cause or wish to cause harm on others for their own personal gain or pleasure. Sheepdogs are those which desire to protect the sheep from the wolves. Grossman asks: "what if you have a capacity for violence, and a deep love for your fellow citizens? Then you are a sheepdog, a warrior, someone who is walking the hero's path."

The mark of a true warrior is one who "creates change of some sort" and who's primary focus is "on helping others." Thus, a warrior is one who goes against the status quo. They "refuse to be swept up in the dominant culture of unconsciousness" and seek to "carefully examine the conventional narrative and assumptions of the day." Such an enterprise involves "leaning into – and learning from – whatever story lines and emotions we encounter… rather than playing our usual game of avoidance." And so, "meditation isn't this soft, fluffy thing. You're facing your fears. You're facing

your stresses head-on… and it's giving you the tools to do that more effectively, and to not be swept away by them." In this way, those who meditate and are compassionate are leading the pack, refusing to be sheep and instead insisting on training themselves and creating the mindsets they need to be ready for anything and to be able to effectively cope with their struggles.

The chaplain here can entertain some comments about what the class thinks about the idea of sheepdogs and answer possible questions. Ask the class if they identify with Grossman's definition and description of sheepdogs. The key part of this section of the module is to help the attendants see the connection between a warrior's compassion and a warrior's need for mindfulness.

Compassion with Others

The chaplain can help members of the class to understand what the sheepdog idea has to do with compassion for so many others by returning to one part of the Supporting Research to highlight what drives them to be actively compassionate as a servicemember. The chaplain can decide which elements of the supporting research they will go over, but should go over the following:

Compassion can be the drive behind a military member's desire to fight and serve. Such a desire comes from a motive to protect and care for others, their families, the freedoms they enjoy in the nation, the cause of peace and liberty, their religious beliefs and freedoms and their fellowman. In that, all service members are compassionate.

At this point, the chaplain should entertain questions and probe the class about their reasons for joining the military and asking them if these ideas resonate with them. The class should be able to apply this quote to all aspects of their lives. Their motives are driven by a love of their family and their fellowman. The chaplain should go through

some of these relationships and show how a protective, sheepdog attitude can be so compassionate. Some relationships to go through would be their families, particularly their spouses and children, their extended families, and their relationships at work.

Final Summary

To end the class and to review all the material one more time, the chaplain can decide which elements of the supporting research they will go over, but should go over the following briefly:

- The definition of compassion (module one)
- Religion and compassion (module one)
- Mindfulness (modules one and two)
- The importance and difficulty of attention (module one – exercise one)
- The compassionate figure (module one – exercise two)
- Self-kindness (module two)
- Wisdom (module two)
- Common Humanity (modules two and three)
- The desire for happiness in life (module two – exercise one)
- The compassionate self (module two – exercise two)
- Sheepdogs (module three)
- Compassion for others (module three)

In order to engage the class further, the chaplain can ask the participants one thing they remember from each of these elements of the modules.

Other Topics if Time Permits:

- Compassion for the enemy; the importance of not objectifying others, even if they are the "bad guys." This sort of compassion is meant to combat the hate that men feel in war. It is possible to differentiate between fulfilling one's duty to neutralize the enemy, and treating the enemy as an object or inhumanly. Rather than projecting compassion onto the enemy, rather, remember the reason why you're in the military as discussed previously.

- Compassion in the work of the military: *Our "tricky brain" could plausibly lead a servicemember to have doubts about killing while holding the conviction that they are not supposed to kill or are haunted by having killed or seen death. Wisdom in such an instance would lead such a servicemember to realize that they have a brain which seems to haunt them, but they can work and exercise their brains to expel those troubling thoughts or images. Such realizations could lead the servicemember to have more compassion for themselves by remembering the reasons for which they went to war or joined the military. From that date, they were conditioned to live in a state where they must act for the good and safety of themselves and their teams.*

- Compassionate assertiveness: the ego is important and it should be used. Focus on the joy of linking with other people. Don't let others walk all over you and don't walk all over others. Rather, work together to find a good solution. Remember that compassion involves common humanity, and so treating those with whom you disagree in a compassionate action.

Discussion

The following discussion questions are intended to spur conversation among the group. Encourage attendants to respond to each other and discuss things among themselves. If conversation is slow, each question has a few follow up questions. If the instruction portion creates positive conversation, use it rather than using these discussion points.

Question One

What do you imagine when you think about using this new knowledge of compassion work with those around you? With your family members? With the units you work with? With people of different ranks than you? With your team members?

Express that there is healing for life's ills in community.

How can seeking out others and working compassionately with them heal you from your troubles, struggles, and suffering?

Question Two

How can compassion help us to practice forgiveness? Why is forgiveness a compassionate act? Are there times when it is not a compassionate act? How would you feel if there were someone who never forgave you for something you did to them? How is it important to remember that we are all members of the human family when we forgive?

Other Topics if Time Permits:

- Engaging the enemy vs. compassion for others.
- The courage that compassion takes.
- Is hate a controllable emotion? When one realizes that the basis of their hatred toward another comes out of fear, anger,

or injury, is it more manageable?

Exercises

The following exercises are intended to help the attendants put into practice a few of the things introduced in the class. The chaplain can do both and have small discussions about each of them, or they can choose to do one and make it longer.

Exercise One

Expanding Compassion (Adapted from "Exercise 18: Widening our Circle of Compassion" from Paul Gilbert and Pema Choden's book *Mindful Compassion,* page 283 to 287)

This exercise is intended to show class members how to open themselves to the idea of spreading compassion to all around them, regardless of who they are and without judgement. It involves projecting compassion to someone close to you, then someone who is neutral, then to someone who is difficult, and lastly to all others.

Settle into a posture that is comfortable yet alert. Gently close your eyes or allow your gaze to fall unfocused on the floor. Create a gentle facial expression of friendliness as if you are with somebody you like. Try relaxing your facial muscles by letting your jaw drop slightly, and then let your mouth turn up into a slight smile.

Now focus on your breathing, on the air coming in through your nose and down into your diaphragm, staying a short while, and then moving back out through your nose. Notice how your diaphragm moves gently as you breathe in and out. You should be breathing slightly more slowly and slightly more deeply than you normally would. The in breath is about three to five seconds, and then you pause momentarily and take three to five seconds for the out breath. It should be a comfortable breath. Notice how your

body responds to your breathing, as if you are linking up with a rhythm within your body that is soothing and calming for you. Notice how you might feel heavier as you sit, more solid, and still in your body.

You may find that thoughts pop into your mind, which is totally find and natural. Don't worry about it. You are not attempting to get rid of thoughts or make your mind go blank. You are not doing anything besides focusing on the soothing breathing rhythm and not becoming involved with the thoughts that pop into your mind. You let them go free without attempting to suppress or become involved with them.

Check again on your friendly facial expression, the gentle smile, and then continue to experience your soothing breathing rhythm. Tune in to the feeling of slowing down. Now imagine that you are identifying with your compassionate self as we covered in module two. Bring your mind to each of the qualities of the compassionate self – wisdom, strength, warmth, commitment – and imagine that these qualities are present within you. Remember to create a friendly facial expression and imagine you have a warm voice tone.

Now bring to mind someone you hold dear and imagine that she is sitting in front of you or going about her daily business. This can be a visual image or a felt sense of her being present. This might be a parent, child, partner, or even an animal for whom you feel a natural flow of love and care. Now think of a time when this person (or animal) was going through a difficult phase. Notice how you feel a sense of concern based on your feelings of tenderness and care, and how there is a natural movement of compassion, wanting to reach out and help alleviate her suffering.

While holding to your compassionate self and maintaining your

friendly facial expression and warm voice tone, imagine directing the following heartfelt wishes to this person:

- *May you be free of suffering, say their name in your mind.*
- *May you be happy, say their name in your mind.*
- *May you flourish, say their name in your mind.*
- *May you find peace, joy, and well-being, say their name in your mind.*

Connect to the flow of compassion toward your loved one and pay attention to the feelings that arise in you when you focus on your heartfelt wish for her to be happy and free from suffering. If the feelings do not flow easily, then remain connected to your intention to be kind, supportive, and committed.

Now shift perspective and reflect for a moment on how it may be very natural for you to feel love and care for this person, but to someone at work, for example, your loved one might be seen as hostile and aggressive and may even be the object of loathing. And then reflect on how, for the vast majority of people, your loved one is merely part of a faceless crowd. So you see how are your feelings a rise out of your particular relationship; they are not qualities intrinsic to that person.

And now reflect that just like you and your loved one, the people who do not like her and the people who are in different to her all want to be happy and free from suffering. In this respect they are all equal. Then let the image of the loved one fade, and spend a few moments tuning in to the feelings that may have arisen in you, noticing in particular how this feels in your body.

No think of someone who you neither like nor dislike, but have some form of contact with on a daily basis. It might be a bus

driver, the person who serves you coffee as you walk to work, a classmate, or someone you see on the train every morning. Bring to mind an actual person. Think that, just like you, this person has dreams, hopes, and fears. Just like you, this person finds herself in the flow of life and struggles with her emotions, life circumstances, and setbacks. Just like you, this personal struggles with feelings of anxiety and anger and self-critical thoughts; she is hurt by rejection and boosted my love.

Now imagine this person facing suffering in some way: perhaps dealing with conflict at work, struggling with addiction or depression, or feeling lonely and unloved. Then allow your heart to feel tenderness and concern for this person and make the following heartfelt aspirations:

- *May you be free of suffering, say their name in your mind.*
- *May you be happy, say their name in your mind.*
- *May you flourish, say their name in your mind.*
- *May you find peace, joy, and well-being, say their name in your mind.*

Notice how you feel when you express these wishes. Perhaps there is a natural flow of care and concern, or perhaps you feel indifferent or even irritated by the exercise. If you notice yourself feeling shut down, irritated, or resistant, simply be curious about this and notice where you feel this in your body. Is there a tightness in your face, jaw, or shoulders, or attention and contraction and some other part of your body? Try to be gentle and honest, not suppressing the emotions you were feeling. Try looking "from the balcony," so to speak, as an observer of how your threat and compassion systems are clashing in some way. Then affirm your intention that although you cannot open up to this person right

now, you make the wish that one day you may open your heart more fully.

No shift perspective and think about how this person to whom you feel indifferent loves and cares for some people; there are people who look forward to seeing her when she comes home from work; there are things in her life that she cherishes. In this way, reflect that you're in difference or neutrality is about you and the way you see things; it's not intrinsic to her.

And now reflect that just like you, this person wants to be happy; and just like you, this person wants to be free from suffering and pain. Just like you, she wants to be loved, safe, and healthy; and just like you, and she does not want to be despised, lonely, or depressed. Let the poignancy of this person Touch you. Then let the image of this person fade and spend a few moments tuning in to the feelings that may have arisen in you, noticing in particular how this feels in your body.

Now think of someone you dislike, and who may have done you some home, someone who is an adversary work competitor, or someone you know but have a little time or regard for. Bring a particular person to mind and imagine that he is present in front of you focusing on the felt sense of his presence. Despite what this person has done, just like you, he has hopes and aspirations for his life. Just like you, he finds himself in the flow of life with a complex brain and a difficult array of emotions that Paul him this way and that. Just like you, this personal struggles with feelings of anxiety and anger and self-critical thoughts.

Now imagine this person facing suffering in some way, perhaps dealing with conflict at home or at work, struggling with addiction or depression, or feeling lonely and unloved. Maybe you can even see that one of the reasons he is difficult it's because inside he

is suffering; he may be insecure and angry at the way his life is. Then allow your heart to feel tenderness and concern for this person and make the following heartfelt wishes:

- *May you be free of suffering, say their name in your mind.*
- *May you be happy, say their name in your mind.*
- *May you flourish, say their name in your mind.*
- *May you find peace, joy, and well-being, say their name in your mind.*

Notice how you feel when you make these wishes. Is there a natural flow of tenderness and care toward this person, or does your heart feel contracted and resentful, not really wanting this person to be happy entry of suffering? Simply notice how you're feeling–there is no right or wrong way to feel. The curious and tune in to how you were feeling in your body–is there tightness in your face, john, or shoulders, or attention and contraction in some other part of your body? Maybe you feel the very opposite of compassion, and that is completely okay. Just affirm your intention that one day you may open your heart more fully then today.

Now shift your perspective and reflect that other people might see your adversary in a very different light. He might be adored by some even though you cannot stand the sight of him. He might be a loving parent at home and very tender with animals. In this way, reflect that your feelings and reactions may have a lot more to do with you then they have to do with him. This does not mean to say that you have to condone his negative actions. If you find this step too difficult, then return to the aspiration stage and aspire to one day see past your initial reactions and wish him well.

And now, once again, reflect that just like you, this person wants to be happy; and just like you, this person wants to be free of

suffering and pain. Just like you, this person wants to be loved, safe, and healthy; and just like you, he does not want to be displaced, lonely, or depressed. Let the humanity of this person touch you. In essence, he is just like you. Then let the image of this person fade and spend a few moments tuning in to the feelings that may have arisen in you, noticing in particular how this feels in your body.

Now bring to mind the three types of people you have been working with– someone close, someone you feel indifferent toward, and someone who is difficult. Recall that they all share the same basic yearning to be happy and free from suffering; they are all actors in the flow of life. In this respect, they are exactly the same. Now contemplate people you know, going through them person bye person. Beginning with friends and then move on to people you have less connection with such as those who serve you coffee or sell you the morning newspaper as you walk to work. Then gradually open this up to include adversaries and those you find it difficult. Imagine that, just like you, these people want happiness and don't want suffering; just like you, these people do not want to stress; just like you, these people want to safety and ease; just like you, they want to be loved. The more personal you can make it, the more powerfully it will move you. No gradually expand your awareness to take in other people who live or work near you, those in your neighborhood and your town, those who live in the same country and continent, and finally all living beings everywhere. And now imagine all beings everywhere, you can conclude with the aspirations of the four limitless contemplation:

- *May all living beings be happy and create the causes of happiness.*
- *May they all be free from suffering and the causes of suffering.*

- *May they all experience great joy and well-being untainted by suffering.*
- *Maybe come to rest in hand in partial state of mind.*

Focus mainly on your heartfelt wishes flowing out in all directions and becoming more and more expensive. And then faster a sense of appreciation for all these countless living beings upon him our lives depend in so many ways, in this way seeing a life as an interconnected web. Then let the visualization fade and spend a few moments tuning in to the feelings that may have arisen in you, nursing in particular how this feels in your body.

Now bring your mind into this room again and take three deep breaths with me. One. Sitting naturally. Two. Opening your eyes. Three. The mind back to our class. Stretch and move your body a little bit.

Chaplain: Pause for a moment to let the class resituate themselves then have a brief discussion about their feelings during the exercise. Ask them what kinds of thoughts went through their minds and if they discovered something new, or a desire to be compassionate to all they had not known.

Exercise Two

Compassion for Others (Adapted from "Exercise 20: Tonglen for Others" from Paul Gilbert and Pema Choden's book *Mindful Compassion*, page 293 to 294)

This exercise is intended to give the class members a tool they can use in order to expand their minds to the idea of compassion for all others. It involves being aware of everyone around them and seeking to relieve their suffering, at least symbolically.

Settle back into a posture that is comfortable yet alert. Gently

close your eyes or allow your gaze to fall unfocused on the floor. Create a gentle facial expression of friendliness. Relax your facial muscles and then let your mouth turn up into a slight smile.

Now focus on your breathing, on the air coming in through your nose and down into your diaphragm, staying a short while, and then moving back out through your nose. Notice how your diaphragm moves gently as you breathe in and out. It should be a comfortable breath. Notice how your body responds to your breathing, as if you are linking up with a rhythm within your body that is soothing and calming for you. Notice how you might feel heavier as you sit, more solid, and still in your body.

You may find that thoughts pop into your mind, which is totally find and natural. Don't worry about it. You are not attempting to get rid of thoughts or make your mind go blank. You are not doing anything besides focusing on the soothing breathing rhythm and not becoming involved with the thoughts that pop into your mind. You let them go free without attempting to suppress or become involved with them.

Check again on your friendly facial expression, the gentle smile, and then continue to experience your soothing breathing rhythm. Tune in to the feeling of slowing down.

Now imagine that you are identifying with your compassionate self. Bring to mind each of the qualities of your compassionate self– wisdom, strength, warmth, and commitment– And imagine that these qualities are fully present within you. Remember to create a friendly facial expression and imagine you have a warm voice tone.

Imagine that sitting in front of you is someone in your life you know to be suffering. Bring to mind the details of his appearance and what he is going through, opening yourself to this person's

pain and letting it touch you. Be curious and interested in what he is going through without judging or condemning it. Then form a strong intention to release the person from his suffering and it causes.

Now imagine breathing in the other persons suffering in the form of a dark cloud and visualize it being drawn into your heart region, where it dissolves the tight tonight of contraction in your heart Andrew feels the fullness of your compassionate potential. Remember that all the suffering gets transformed in your heart region; none of it gets stuck in there. As you breathe out, imagine that you are sending the other person all your healing love, warmth, energy, confidence, and joy in the form of brilliant light. If you find the image of a dark cloud too strong, then focus on the flow of feeling–being aware of the persons pain, opening up to it on the in-breath, letting it to touch you, and opening out auntie out-breath, giving out feelings of spaciousness, loving-kindness, and care.

Continue this practice of "giving and to receiving" with each breath for as long as you wish. If you find yourself feeling blocked or going numb, then shift your focus to these feelings and yourself and make them the focus of the practice, breathing in for yourself and all other people in a similar situation. If this feels difficult then go back to focusing on soothing breathing with him interesting in your compassionate self, bringing to mind the qualities of the compassionate self.

At the end of the practice consider that your compassion has dissolved all of the person's suffering and it's causes, filling him with peace and happiness. If you notice any feelings of well-being or spaciousness in yourself, tune in to where you feel them in your body and allow yourself to appreciate these feelings.

Now bring your mind into this room again and take three deep breaths with me. One. Sitting naturally. Two. Opening your eyes. Three. The mind back to our class. Stretch and move your body a little bit.

Chaplain: Pause for a moment to let the class resituate themselves then have a brief discussion about the class's experience. Suggest that this exercise can be used for people who are remembering others in their prayers, if they believe in prayer. Thank the class for their participation and at this time, the module is over and the class is free to leave. Ask the class to think about these exercises and to try to use them in their lives. If they want to learn more, encourage them to reach out to you and you can have more discussions one on one.

Resources

Another possible resource for those who want to build their compassion can purchase Karen Armstrong's *Twelve Steps to a Compassionate Life.* Instructional or reading club materials are available for this book and could be a great resource for chaplains.

Applications

During Deployment

The subject of compassion for others may cause some to be a bit apprehensive especially when deployed. The chaplain may decide to focus specifically on having compassion for those who are in the servicemember's everyday interactions, as I have done in the main part of the module. However, if there are those who would like to talk about it, there are some suggestions for further discussion and study in the Other Topics section of this module.

Post-deployment Reintegration

Using compassion work to reintegrate with the servicemember's

family or the conditions he or she returns to can be particularly important when considering the need for the family to act compassionately for the servicemember, and vice versa. The family can grow closer together as they work to be more compassionate for each other and build their sense of commonality and love for each other.

Possible Future Classes:

- Common humanity.
- Using compassion work in the home, with families.
- Fighting a divorce with compassion.
- The tricky brain and coping with difficulties.

Focus specifically on widening our circle of compassion (module three exercise two).

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