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CENTER FOR
COMPASSION
INTEGRITY &
SECULAR ETHICS

COMPASSIONATE INTEGRITY TRAINING

A SECULAR ETHICS APPROACH TO CULTIVATING
PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL FLOURISHING

COMPASSIONATE INTEGRITY TRAINING

By:

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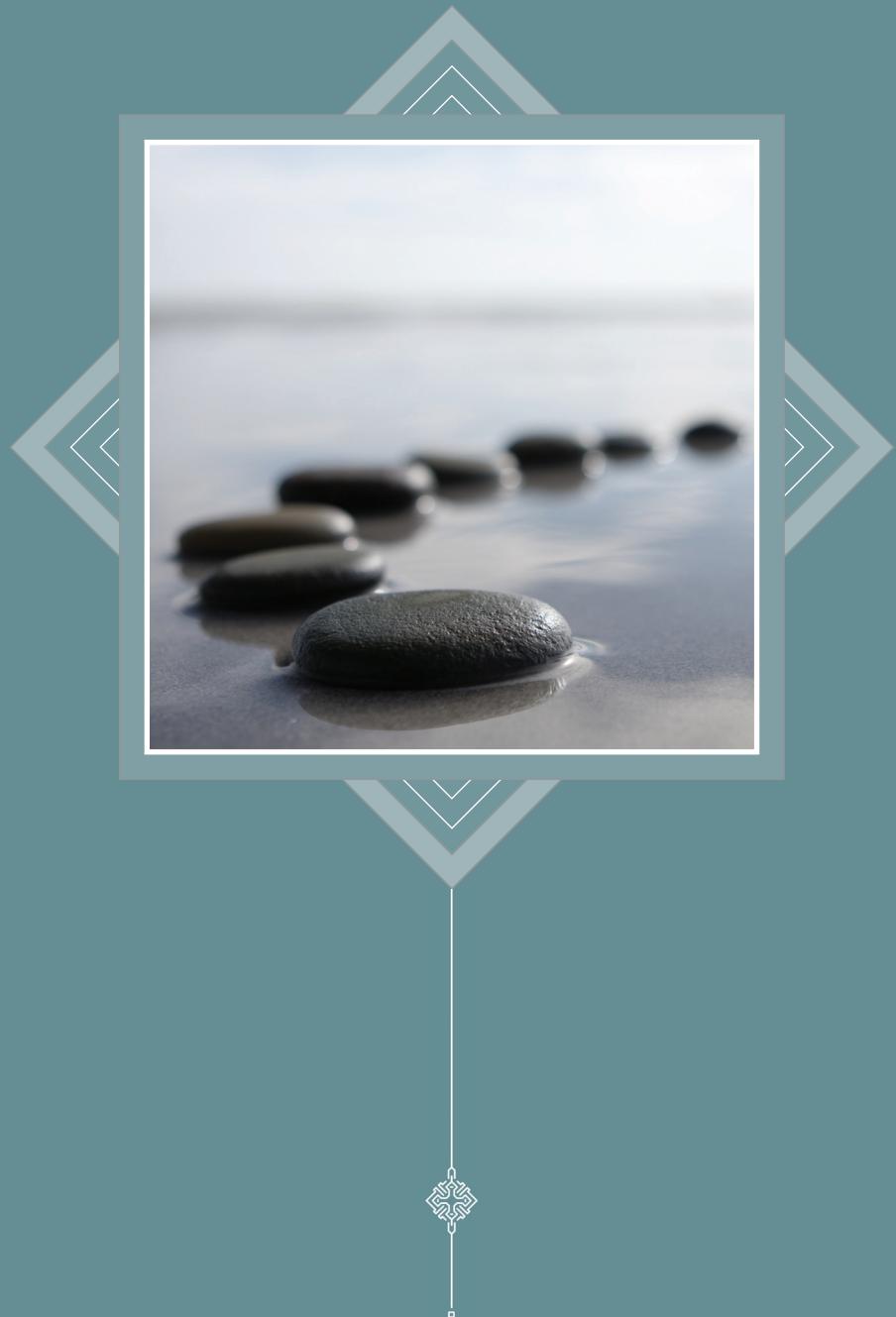
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INTRODUCTION

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INTRODUCTION

Compassionate Integrity Training (CIT) is a multi-part training program that cultivates basic human values as skills for the purpose of increasing individual, social and environmental flourishing. By covering a range of skills from self-regulation and self-compassion to compassion for others and engagement with complex systems, CIT focuses on and builds toward *compassionate integrity*: the ability to live one's life in accordance with one's values with a recognition of common humanity, our basic orientation to kindness, and reciprocity. Unlike some definitions of integrity that focus on mere consistency with one's values, without examining what those values are, *compassionate integrity* insists that consistency with one's values is not enough if those values promote harm to oneself, others or the world. Instead, maintaining and increasing consistency with one's values is most beneficial when they are values that promote one's own well-being as well as that of others. As to what those values are and how we understand them, this is arrived at by investigating and examining things for oneself, using common sense, common experience and science. Compassionate integrity is, therefore, not something

achieved merely as a result of wishful thinking or force of will, but rather as the result of building up knowledge, understanding and a set of concrete skills. Because compassionate integrity is what guards against actions that compromise the well-being of oneself and others, cultivating it in one's life and in one's community directly impacts individual and collective flourishing.

Although CIT deals with values and concepts like compassion and integrity, it is based on a secular approach to universal ethics based on common sense, common experience and science, rather than a particular culture or religion.¹ Secular ethics can be useful to people of any or no religious background, while not being in any way in conflict with any particular religious values. The word "secular" in no way implies a stance that is against religion; on the contrary, it implies inclusivity and a respect for all. This approach to ethics has been advocated by organizations such as the Sustainable Development Solutions Network of the United Nations through its World Happiness Report, and individuals such as His Holiness the Dalai Lama. The United Nations Declaration on Human Rights of 1948 was also based on a



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secularized philosophy of universal values which took all human beings, all nations, all cultures and all religions and nonbelievers into account.

CIT is based on cutting-edge developments in the fields of neuroscience, psychology, trauma-informed care, peace and conflict studies, and contemplative science, and builds off of work done by Daniel Goleman (author of the book *Emotional Intelligence*) and Peter Senge, initiatives in Social and Emotional Learning (SEL), and other areas.² Its development has been aided by the collaborative work of a team of experts with both academic and applied backgrounds in these areas. The development of CIT would also not have been possible if not for a range of other programs and protocols that have been trailblazers in exploring the cultivation of resilience, mindfulness, gratitude, compassion and a recognition of interdependence. These programs include Cognitively-Based Compassion Training at Emory University, Compassion Cultivation Training at Stanford University, Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction, the Trauma Resiliency Model and Community Resiliency Models of the Trauma Resource Institute, the Ayeka model and the Japanese practice of *Naikan*. While CIT is a complete training in itself, those who explore these other available methods and protocols will no doubt expand and deepen their understanding of the concepts and practices explored in CIT.

CIT begins with the foundational concepts that set the stage for the entire program, and then moves through a series of 10 modules, each focusing on a particular skill. These modules are organized into three series, each corresponding to a domain.

THE CIT CURRICULUM

Foundational Concepts

Series I: Self-Cultivation

1. Calming Body and Mind
2. Ethical Mindfulness
3. Emotional Awareness
4. Self-Compassion

Series II: Relating to Others

5. Impartiality and Common Humanity
6. Forgiveness and Gratitude
7. Empathic Concern
8. Compassion

Series III: Engaging in Systems

9. Appreciating Interdependence
10. Engaging with Discernment

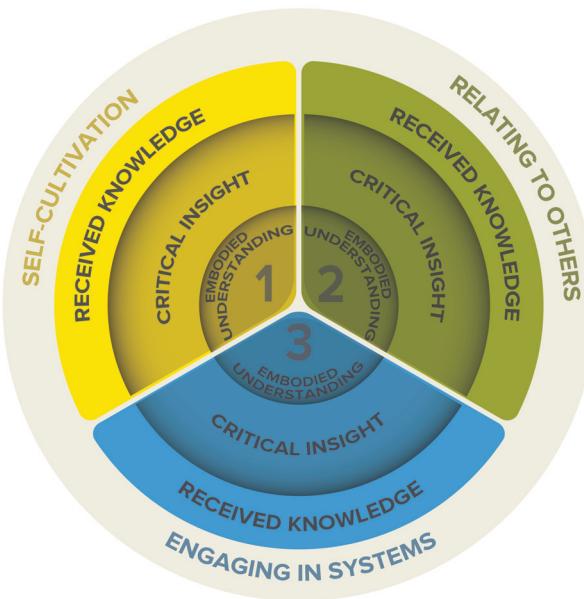
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THREE-IN-THREE EDUCATIONAL MODEL

Compassionate Integrity Training (CIT) utilizes a “three-in-three” educational model that integrates three domains of knowledge and three levels of understanding.³ The three domains begin with a focus on the self (Self-cultivation), then move to others (Relating to Others), and finally to a systems perspective, meaning the larger networks we exist in.

1. **Self-Cultivation** covers how one relates to oneself and the knowledge and skills related to the inner life of the individual. This begins with the ability to self-regulate one’s body and emotions, and then moves on to include self-compassion and inner qualities like courage, fortitude, forbearance and the identification of one’s values.
2. **Relating to Others** covers how one relates to others constructively and in a way that promotes one’s own and others’ well-being. Built on the foundation of self-regulation and restraint from harming others, this involves strengthening the prosocial skills of forgiveness, gratitude, impartiality, empathy and compassion.



3. **Engaging in Systems** covers how one engages compassionately and with integrity as a participant in complex systems. This involves recognizing our interdependence and the interdependence of systems, which can be as small as our family or local community, or as vast as the world, and developing the skills and discernment to act effectively for constructive change within those systems. Engaging with compassionate integrity and critical thinking gives us the best chance for achieving positive results that enhance the well-being and flourishing of ourselves and others.

Additionally, each module in CIT is intended to allow participants to progress through three levels of understanding. In CIT, it is important that knowledge not remain at an intellectual level; to be effective, it must lead to realizations and lasting changes in behavior. Knowledge becomes transformative when it moves from head to heart to hand. The three levels of understanding are:

1. **Received Knowledge:** This refers to learning new information and developing a clear understanding of

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a particular topic. It is the first step in developing understanding. Received knowledge can be quite extensive, but at this level it has not yet become personal.

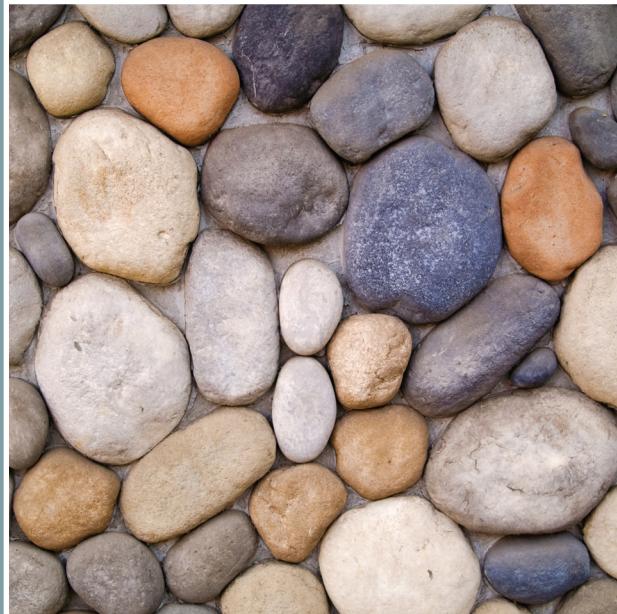
2. **Critical Insight:** This is when the participant, through exercises and practices, uses his or her own life experiences and reason to come to a flash of personal insight, an “aha moment”, when he or she realizes how the knowledge relates to his or her own life. At this point knowledge has started to become transformative.
3. **Embodied Understanding:** Moments of critical insight are often not powerful enough to dislodge habits. Therefore, embodied understanding refers to the deepening and further internalizing of knowledge so that it becomes second-nature and spontaneous: not just something one knows, but part of who one is. This happens through repeated practice and continued reflection on one’s critical insights. Recent discoveries in neuroplasticity and neurogenesis show that sustained practice changes brain structure and neural functioning, suggesting that long-term changes in body, brain and behavior are possible. This is where knowledge (including the knowledge and skills of self-compassion, compassion, integrity and so on) becomes transformative at its deepest level.

These three levels of knowledge apply to learning many skills, such as speaking a foreign language or playing a musical instrument. At first the student needs to learn the different parts of the instrument, how to read sheet music and so on. Ongoing study and repeated practice eventually leads to moments where things just “click” and the student gains insights that lead to sudden increases in their understanding and ability to play. For these gains to be consolidated, however, the student needs to continue to practice in the correct way over a long period of time. Eventually, over a longer period of practice and study time, this leads to a degree of fluency where the student’s ability to play a piece (or speak the language) is spontaneous and embodied.

Each CIT module includes content for received knowledge (including a written explanation, audio podcasts, and PowerPoint presentations), activities for achieving critical insight and guided reflective practices for deepening insights into embodied understanding. This manual includes the content for each of the modules, as well as the Learning Outcomes for each. The manual is designed to be used as part of a CIT course taught by a certified CIT Facilitator. However, if a facilitator is not available, it can also be used on its own, accompanied by the audio podcasts, audio guided practices and other online resources.

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FOUNDATIONAL CONCEPTS

This section covers the foundational concepts that underlie all of Compassionate Integrity Training. It draws from recent developments in various scientific disciplines and provides some of the theories and the research upon which CIT is built.

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FOUNDATIONAL CONCEPTS

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Content

- Participants will explore how we all want happiness and to avoid distress, harm and difficulties.
- Participants will explore how humans are social beings that require cooperative groups to survive.
- Participants will explore how our wish for happiness and need for others means that we all are oriented toward kindness and compassion over selfishness and meanness. Having compassion and kindness at the core is a shift away from darker views of human nature as unrelentingly selfish and fierce.
- Participants will learn about neuroplasticity and the fact that people change over time through practice.
- Participants will explore how all human beings have inherent value.

Practice

- Participants will gain a greater understanding of their values and how those values are grounded in their basic orientation toward kindness, care and compassion.
- Participants will gain a deeper appreciation for their inherent value and innate potential as a human being.

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THE FIRST FUNDAMENTAL SHIFT: OUR BASIC ORIENTATION TOWARD KINDNESS

For thousands of years, people have wrestled with the questions, *“What is at the heart of the human being? What is it that truly drives human beings?”* Philosophers, theologians and other academics have asked these questions for most of human history. They have wondered if humans are driven by purely selfish motives and whether human beings are inherently evil. The 17th century English philosopher, Thomas Hobbes, believed that without government to control the population, the “state of nature” would drive humanity into a “war of all against all.”⁵ Hobbes’s ideas exemplify what primatologist Frans DeWaal calls the “veil theory,” namely that morality is only a thin veneer hiding our inherently selfish nature. For many biologists stretching back to Thomas Henry Huxley, an early proponent of Darwinism, to George C. Williams today, morality is not believed to be inherent to human nature and is a very late development in the history of humankind.⁶ Without religious systems, laws and other restrictions put in place to hold back our selfish and unethical tendencies, they argue, we would live in chaos.

In recent years, there has been a significant shift from this view of human beings as basically selfish and completely driven by that self-interest to a view of humans as mainly

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driven by the need to receive and express compassion, care and kindness.⁷ Maternal care is one universal that demonstrates an evolutionary advantage to explain how humans have come to be hardwired for compassion. Every mammal and bird species requires maternal care for the survival of their offspring. Without maternal care, these species would die off in a single generation. As mammals, our human anatomy has similar biological and physiological systems that make offspring naturally seek care and adults naturally provide it. Humans are driven by connection and care. In fact, any species of mammal or bird that does not receive care in the form of touch or contact from another individual from the species, will not fully develop.⁸ In particular, unnurtured individuals have physically and anatomically underdeveloped brains, depleted immune function, and suffer from intense anxiety and depression.⁹ It has become

abundantly clear that more than water, food and shelter is needed for our survival and development: we need warmth, affection and compassion.¹⁰

Going beyond maternal care, humans require relationships with others for survival as well. Although human beings sit at the top of the so-called food chain, this is not the result of our ability to be physically more powerful than other species, but rather our ability to work together, cooperate and protect one another. From an evolutionary perspective, as our species evolved, we could never have survived on our own. Social isolation meant physical death, because alone, one would be vulnerable to predators. In comparison, human beings in a group protecting and caring for each other survive and even thrive. From this understanding, the need to connect and care for others is built into our survival instinct.



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Frans DeWaal, a primatologist at Emory University, conducts research with different animal species to see how deeply the sense of social connection extends. DeWaal and colleagues examine which emotions, specifically moral emotions, are shared with other animals. Moral emotions include: gratitude, compassion, forgiveness, empathy, and a sense of fairness and justice. DeWaal and his colleagues are increasingly finding evidence to demonstrate that other mammals do experience social and moral emotions, at least in protoform.

It has been found, for example, that Capuchin monkeys reject unequal pay for equal work.¹¹ In studies, monkeys were rewarded with a small slice of cucumber when they completed a simple task. However, when one monkey started to get rewarded with a grape, a better reward, the other monkey stopped participating if it was only offered a cucumber. The monkeys who were offered unequal rewards become agitated, banging on the cage and making loud vocalizations, and refused to participate until they were given the same reward.

The presence of what we might consider social and moral emotions among animals, at least in a protoform, is not limited to unequal pay, but extends to cooperative behavior, reciprocal helping and remembering help.¹² For instance, if one monkey or chimp helps another, it has been found that the recipient is more likely to return that kindness the next day or on subsequent days, suggesting a form of protogratititude even among nonhuman animals. Consolation behavior is also commonly witnessed when two chimpanzees get into a fight, and the chimp who lost the fight is consoled by another member of the group who puts his or her arm around the loser.¹³

Since such examples are common among mammalian and bird species, primatologists and comparative

psychologists such as DeWaal conclude that maternal care is likely the common factor at the root of these tendencies. At some point, dating back to at least the last common ancestor between birds and mammals, there was a shift that occurred toward the ability to care for offspring. From this, the social and moral tendencies developed in a more concrete way out of a need to extend and receive care. All this helps to explain why sociality and the ability to care and respond to care is a very deep and internalized mechanism within the human brain and body.

Moving from birds and mammals to humans, research has been conducted with infants and young children showing similar outcomes to the research with monkeys. Presumably before these infants and young children are imprinted with the teachings and learning that come with later life, children still distinguish helping behavior automatically.¹⁴ For instance, 5-month-old babies have been found to show preferences for animations of characters or puppets that are providing help as opposed to those impeding others.¹⁵ Even extremely young infants reach out toward those characters providing help and care and move away from those impeding help and not giving care.¹⁶

If it is believed that humans are intrinsically selfish, then all human institutions (including business, criminal justice, law, medicine, etc.) will inevitably reflect this perspective. If we see ourselves as having compassion at the core, then we can look for different ways to do business, establish justice, conduct law and practice medicine. It is important to acknowledge that selfishness is not the same as self-interest, which is a basic attitude of preferring and seeking well-being. CIT's approach does not eliminate self-interest; rather, the question is whether we can be wise about our self-interest and

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STUDIES SHOW
ANIMALS ARE AWARE
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recognize that we flourish best when we are in constructive relations with others.

As human beings in today's world, we live in complex, interconnected societies. Our everyday activities and personal goals require contributions from countless others. Therefore, other-interest and self-interest go hand-in-hand. Our relationships with each other are as vital as our relationship to the environment. If we were to destroy the environment out of short-term selfishness, this would hardly be an effective act of self-interest. Similarly, to seek personal gain in ways that alienate or deprive everyone around oneself is not effective self-interest either. Science is showing that far from harming self-interest, the cultivation of prosocial emotions like compassion, gratitude and forgiveness actually benefits the self, just as much, if not more, than it benefits others.¹⁷ If genuine altruism seems too lofty a goal, therefore, we can still aim for an enlightened self-interest that benefits the self by benefiting others.

The Dark Side of Our Need to Connect

There is a dark side in the human need to connect to others. When this need is not met, we feel it intensely. For instance, people often claim that their number one fear is the fear of public speaking.¹⁸ In surveys, people will often list this fear even above the fear of death. Why is this? From an evolutionary perspective, our physical survival depended on our ability to live in groups. Therefore, for the individual, social isolation could mean physical death. Our physiology is still wired to sound the alarm of social isolation as though our lives depended on it, so we fear social rejection very intensely. Although no physical harm will likely befall us when giving a public speech, when on stage our bodies can respond as if it might. Our bodies, in

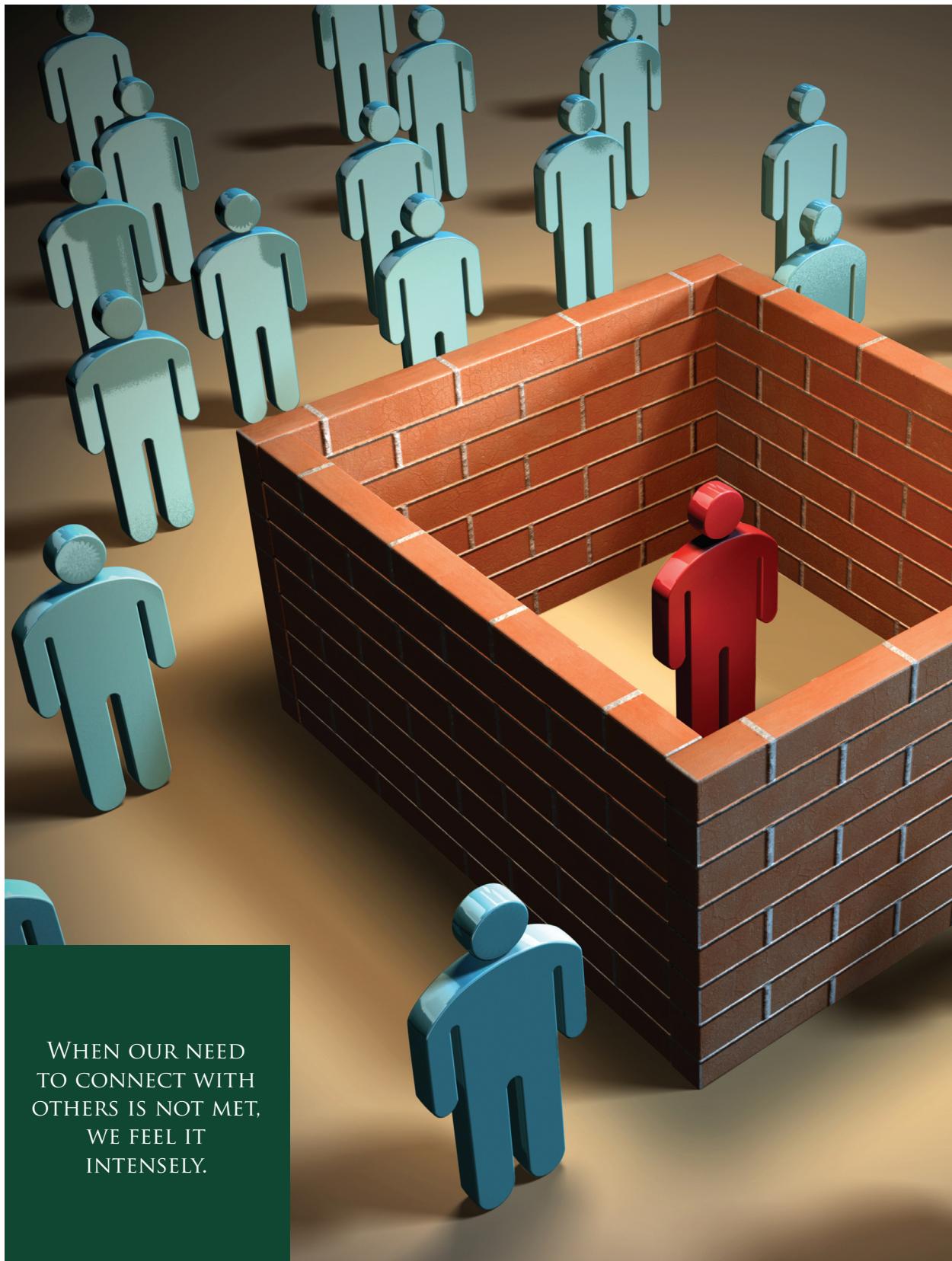
order to keep us alive, have come to link social rejection very closely with physical danger.¹⁹

Our need for social acceptance is so deeply rooted in our psychology and physiology that when we lack it, we face dire consequences for our mental and physical health. When we lack social support, care and protection from others, we experience loneliness, depression and a variety of negative health outcomes, including even changes in gene expression.²⁰ Social embarrassment is so painful and scary to us, that sometimes we even attempt or commit suicide out of fear of social rejection. This can be seen from statistics: groups of people who are at risk for social isolation and rejection consistently show much higher attempted suicide rates. Those who self-identify as gay, lesbian or bisexual, and whose sexual orientation is not accepted by their family, have attempted suicide rates of 7 to 8 times that of the average, while those who self-identify as transgender face attempted suicide rates of 100 times or more compared to those who do not.²¹ Parental rejection, in particular, is an exacerbating factor. Recently, the principal of a private school in Atlanta, Georgia committed suicide because a secret about him was coming to light. Similarly, a college student committed suicide after being outed for being gay before he came out publicly himself.²² Such stories have become all too common.

Although the reasons for suicide are very complex and highly individual, this data suggests the tragic consequences of social rejection and social isolation. When we encounter others and treat them with hostility, threats and rejection, rather than with compassion, we are deeply impacting others' physiology. Social threats create a stress-response, which leads to inflammation and other physiological changes, making people less healthy.²³ In turn, inflammation can even change gene expression, making individuals more susceptible to chronic illnesses,

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depression and cancer.²⁴ Furthermore, such actions undermine the basic social bonds that we have evolved to need to flourish as a community and society.

We have seen that as humans we have a capacity for empathy, compassion and love that is deeply rooted in our brains and bodies, and without which, we would cease to survive as a species. One might ask: if compassion lies at our core and is so deeply rooted in us, why do we still see violence, cruelty and apathy in the world? The reason is that despite being fundamental to our well-being, our prosocial tendencies tend to be limited to those near and dear to us. Since they likely evolved for survival purposes, they are governed by what is called “in-group bias.” One thing we also share with non-human mammals is the ability to form ingroups – those we consider to be similar to us and, therefore, more worthy of our love, empathy and compassion – and out-groups, everyone else, who we can ignore or even demonize.

Our biological capacity for compassion can be limited, and it can also be irrational. This is partially explained as the effect of what is known as “compassion fade,” although it might be more accurate to say that it is a fading of empathy. For example, when we see a single person suffering or in need, we may feel a tremendous amount of feeling for them. However, if we increase the number of those suffering from one to two, instead of increasing, our sense of concern tends to go down. If we increase it to thousands, we tend to feel helpless and have a very muted empathy.²⁵ This phenomenon is why most charities using a commercial or video choose to focus on one child who is starving or suffering rather than hundreds or thousands.²⁶ But it makes no sense to be more strongly compelled by knowing that one person is suffering than if we were to witness thousands of people suffering. This underscores the fact

that we have kindness and compassion at our core, but it is limited in scope and can manifest in irrational ways.²⁷

THE SECOND FUNDAMENTAL SHIFT: NEUROPLASTICITY AND NEUROGENESIS

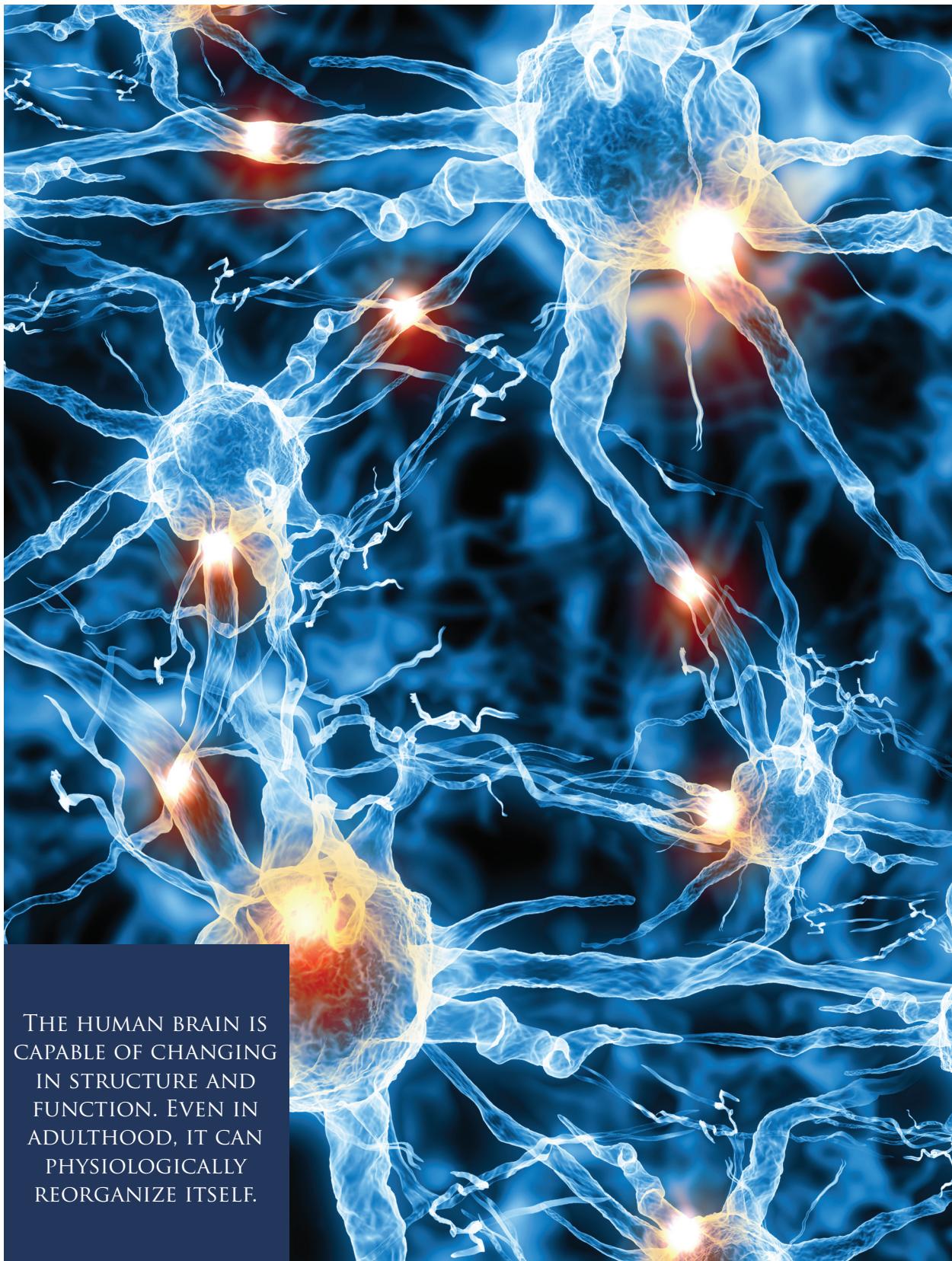
There is a second shift that has been offered through research in the last twenty years. If the first shift is that we have kindness at the core, then the second shift is our capacity to increase our kindness and compassion. Research suggests that eliciting anger and other antisocial emotions negatively affects human immune function, illustrating that these emotions can have a direct effect on our psychological and physiological health.²⁸ However, the cultivation of compassion and a greater sense of connection with others appears to have the opposite effect. Studies suggest that such cultivation improves immune function and reduces psychosocial stress.²⁹ All of this suggests that our need for compassion and care is built into our bodies, and that if we know this, we can use this knowledge to our benefit.

This second shift occurred in the mid 1990s, beginning with the recognition of neuroplasticity and neurogenesis.³⁰ It was only at this point that neuroscientists agreed that even the adult brain, earlier thought to be fully developed and non-malleable after around age twenty-five, could still change in structure and function, and continued to grow new brain cells up until death.³¹ Up until this point, scientists who believed in neuroplasticity and neurogenesis were so ridiculed for this theory that some of them even lost their jobs or grants.³²

We now know that the brain grows in measurable ways and can form new pathways and increase cortical thickness

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THE HUMAN BRAIN IS
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through sustained practice and study.³³ This opens the door to exploring our human potential. If we are able to change our brain on this most basic level, the question then becomes, “In what direction should we train our brain?” It is an extremely important shift to know that we can change the structure and function of our brain by practice.³⁴ It means that we can cultivate and practice ethical skills and basic human values, and overcome much of the limited and irrational nature of our biologically-based compassion, expanding on our biology to expand our ability to be fair, compassionate and just.³⁵

THE VALUE OF EVERY LIFE

Fundamental for both self-care and compassion for others is the recognition that our life has immense value, and so too do the lives of others. The more we see our life as precious, the more we will appreciate it and engage in the activities that lead to protecting our genuine well-being and not sacrificing our long-term well-being for temporary satisfactions. The more we see others’ lives as precious, the more we will show concern and consideration for them, engaging in actions that promote their well-being and that protect them from harm. Not everyone is able to recognize the preciousness and value of their own life, much less the lives of strangers, but CIT includes practices that explore the question of whether our life and the lives of others have value, meaning and worth.

Our society tends to evaluate worth on the basis of performance and utility. It holds up things like fame, wealth, level of education, physical beauty and material success, as if these were true indicators of a person’s value. An overly material focus leads to seeing people in a transactional way

– a person’s value may be only what that person can do for me or my interests. But if we look deeper, we can see that this is a somewhat shallow way of thinking about the value of people. We know this intuitively when we look upon a newborn baby to whom we feel affection. The love that parents or caregivers experience when seeing a newborn is not based on what that child can do at that moment or will do in the future; it is based solely on his or her existence as something precious and wonderful. This is why when a child is born with a serious genetic disorder or disease that may cause the child to die prematurely, those who care for it rarely call for the baby to be euthanized. That child has value in the eyes of those who view it with affection, despite its apparent lack of utilitarian value to society.

We were also all once that baby. Even if we feel that we never received affection, or enough of it, the fact that we survived our time in the womb and our birth, and indeed survived up to this very point, is proof that we had at least some value in the eyes of others. Without such value, we would not have survived, because as unborn children or infants, we simply cannot survive on our own. If we look closely, we will see that our daily existence even now is supported by the kind acts of countless others who prepare our food, ensure our safety and maintain the conditions that we need to survive and live our lives the way we do. Recognizing the value that we have, which we can see through the investments that others make in us and have made in us, provides a secure base for us to grow and develop our inner qualities.

The inherent value of human life is illustrated by a legal debate found in the Jewish Talmud. In it, Rabbah, a third century rabbi, asks the following question: If a man throws a vase from a tall building and, right before it hits the ground, another man hits it with a stick, causing the

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vase to shatter, who is liable?³⁶ Rabbah concludes that the thrower is liable for the damage and not the one who hit it with the stick, because the second man broke a broken vessel. Once thrown, Rabbah says, it is considered a “doomed vase,” because it no longer has any use and therefore no value. Then Rabbah asks: If instead of a vase, a man throws a baby from the building, and a second man “catches it on the end of his sword” before it hits the ground, who is most liable for her death? Rabbah concludes that while both the thrower and the stabber are considered liable for murder, the stabber is more culpable and subject to punishment. The difference is this: the vase’s value lies only in its form and function, but human life has nothing to do with how useful one is or what function one performs. As a result, every split second of a human life is valuable. Because human life is not merely of utilitarian value, a baby does not lose its value when it becomes a “doomed baby,” and even ending its life a split second sooner than it would have otherwise is tragic.

The point is that, in the eyes of a person who cares deeply for us, even a moment of our life is precious, and we can

come to see others’ lives in this way too. As we move toward this, we feel more connected, more grounded and more confident; our own flourishing and our collective flourishing with others increases. This is a point that CIT will return to again and again in various forms.

SECULAR ETHICS

The fundamental shifts outlined in the previous sections provide the basis for a secular approach to a system of universal human values, or a secular ethics. For the first time, scientific disciplines are exploring basic human values like compassion, gratitude and forgiveness, and the impact they have on our physical, psychological and social health. Moreover, science is also exploring how we can cultivate these values for the benefit of ourselves and others. This has given rise to entirely new fields like positive psychology and social and affective neuroscience, and to regular academic and scientific conferences like Stanford University’s “Science of Compassion” conference that is held every two years.

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Over the past two decades, His Holiness the Dalai Lama has been articulating a vision for secular ethics in his books and talks.³⁷ Although not the sole proponent of this idea, his vision is presented most clearly and has proved very influential in these fields, so we will outline his understanding here, as it forms an important context for CIT.

The Dalai Lama's call for secular ethics is based on his recognition that the world has become far more interconnected and interdependent over the past century, and our communities far more diverse. No longer can societies rely on individual cultural or religious systems to provide ethical frameworks that will satisfy all of their citizens, let alone the global problems that cut across vast numbers of societies. In order to confront the issues facing the planet, we must find ways to agree upon and teach a set of values that transcend any one cultural or religious system.

The Dalai Lama articulates his vision through the metaphor of tea and water, where the tea is religion and ethics is water. There are many different religions, just as there are many types of tea, and each adds its own qualities to a person's life, just as teas add more flavor and nutrition to water. "But however the tea is prepared, the primary ingredient is always water," the Dalai Lama says. "While we can live without tea, we can't live without water. Likewise, we are born free of religion, but we are not born free of the need for compassion."³⁸ Here he uses compassion as the core of secular ethics, the water that is the common value that sustains and connects all people, religious or not. He goes on to state, "In today's secular world, religion alone is no longer adequate as a basis for ethics ... any religion-based answer to the problem of our neglect of inner values can never be universal, and so will be inadequate. What we need today is an approach to ethics which makes no recourse to religion and can be equally acceptable to those with

faith and those without: a secular ethics."³⁹ Here the Dalai Lama is not critiquing religion; after all, he is a religious person himself. Instead, he is pointing out that a religious answer to the world's problems can never be universal, because there is no one religion that all the people of the world can agree upon. Therefore, if we are to have a truly universal approach, it must be open to all people.

CIT focuses on relationship between our internal well-being and the external problems in the world. War, intolerance and division, economic inequality, discrimination, violence in our communities and in our schools, and threats to our environment are all pressing problems that have their origins in the decisions we make based on our values. "The fundamental problem," the Dalai Lama writes, "is that at every level we are giving too much attention to the external, material aspects of life while neglecting moral ethics and inner values ... Our inner lives are something we ignore at our own peril, and many of the greatest problems we face in today's world are the result of such neglect."⁴⁰

According to the Dalai Lama, in order to face the challenges confronting our communities and the world, we must first face our own misguided obsessions with wealth, physical pleasure, status and praise and focus more on inner values like compassion, loving kindness and sympathetic joy. This other-orientation is a shift from what he calls "foolish selfish" to "wise selfish," because the result is greater individual and communal flourishing.⁴¹ If we and future generations are to find sustainable solutions to the problems that face us, it will require a firm grounding in moral principles that stress our common humanity, our fundamental equality and our interdependence with each other for survival and communal flourishing.



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Some of the basic human values that the Dalai Lama includes are compassion, kindness, generosity, patience, honesty, forgiveness, self-discipline and contentment.⁴² He appeals to common sense and common experience to see that these values are shared by individuals regardless of religion or lack thereof; however, it is also noteworthy that the scientific study of individual and social flourishing and well-being in fields like positive psychology is beginning to validate these common-sense views.⁴³

The Dalai Lama bases the universality of this approach on what he calls the “two pillars” of secular ethics. The first is common humanity, the fact that we all wish for happiness and well-being, and wish to avoid harm, suffering and dissatisfaction. In this, every human being is the same — indeed, this desire is so basic that

it is even shared by animals. The second is interdependence — we depend on each other for our well-being. As human beings we are social beings. No one individual can survive, much less flourish, without the help of many others. From the moment we come into the world, we depend on others for our survival. Interdependence is, therefore, a basic aspect of our human experience, and has important implications for how we treat one another. Of these two, he writes, “Together, I believe, they constitute an adequate basis for establishing ethical awareness and the cultivation of inner values. It is through such values that we gain a sense of connection with others, and it is by moving beyond narrow self-interest that we find meaning, purpose and satisfaction in life.”⁴⁴

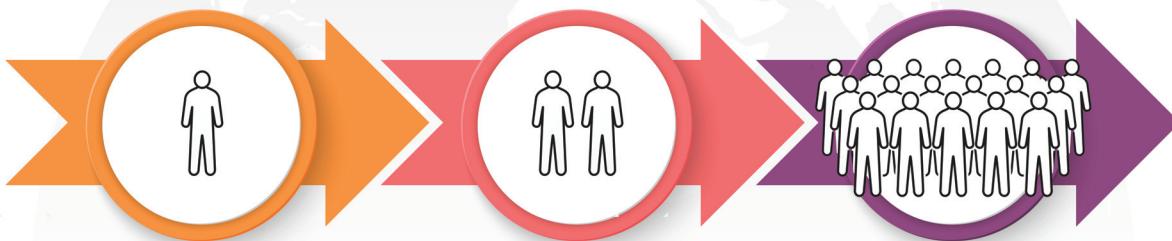
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NOTES

FOUNDATIONAL CONCEPTS

SHIFT FROM A WORLD-VIEW OF NARROW SELF-INTEREST TO COMPASSION



GUIDELINES FOR SUCCESS

1. Help Create a Safe Space
2. "Progress, Not Perfection"
3. "Take What You Want; Leave What You Don't"
4. Attendance and Keeping an Open Mind
5. Other Guidelines?

SERIES I: SELF-CULTIVATION

1. Calming Body and Mind
2. Ethical Mindfulness
3. Emotional Awareness
4. Self-Compassion

SERIES II: RELATING TO OTHERS

5. Impartiality and Common Humanity
6. Forgiveness and Gratitude
7. Empathic Concern
8. Compassion

SERIES III: ENGAGING IN SYSTEMS

9. Appreciating Interdependence
10. Engaging with Discernment

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NOTES

FOUNDATIONAL CONCEPTS

THE FIRST FUNDAMENTAL SHIFT: OUR BASIC ORIENTATION TOWARD KINDNESS

- Shift from a worldview of narrow self-interest to compassion
- Our biological basis for kindness and compassion
- Humans require relationships with others to survive
- Humans are wired for fairness
- Selfish vs. Self-interest
- The Dark Side of Our Need to Connect
- Our empathy can be limited and at times irrational



THE SECOND FUNDAMENTAL SHIFT: NEUROPLASTICITY AND NEUROGENESIS

- Neuroplasticity
- Neurogenesis
- We can cultivate compassion and other pro-social values with measurable changes to our brains, health and behavior

LINKING THE TWO SHIFTS TOGETHER: SECULAR ETHICS

- Tea and water metaphor
- "Two Pillars" - Common Humanity and Interdependence
- Common Sense, Common Experience and Science

THE VALUE OF EVERY LIFE

- Utilitarian value versus inherent value
- The fact that we are alive shows we have all been valued by others

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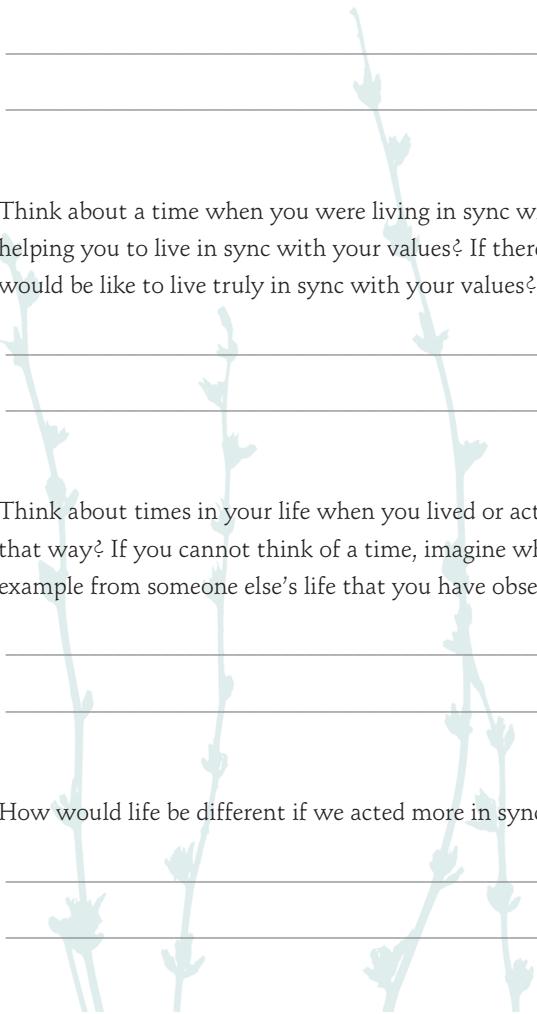
REFLECTIVE WRITING EXERCISE

FOUNDATIONAL CONCEPTS

Instructions: Answer the following questions as freely and openly as possible. Your answers are for you only and are not meant to be shared. As such, do not worry about the quality of your prose or grammar. There's no need to think much before you write; you can just write.

1. What values are most important to you?

2. How are those values related to our basic human kindness?



3. Think about a time when you were living in sync with your values. What was it like? What do you think was helping you to live in sync with your values? If there is no such time that you can think of, what do you imagine it would be like to live truly in sync with your values?



4. Think about times in your life when you lived or acted out of sync with your values. Why do you think you acted in that way? If you cannot think of a time, imagine what it might be like to act out of sync with one's values, or use an example from someone else's life that you have observed.



5. How would life be different if we acted more in sync with our values, individually and collectively?



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MINDFUL DIALOGUE EXERCISE

FOUNDATIONAL CONCEPTS

Instructions: Each participant will select a partner with whom to have a mindful conversation. Take turns answering the following questions. The partner whose turn it is to listen should follow these rules:

1. Be totally present for the other person.
2. Avoid asking questions.
3. Avoid giving advice.
4. Maintain total confidentiality: anything that your conversation partner decides to share must be held in strict confidence.

Question 1: What values are most important to you?

Question 2: What benefit do you get from living your life in a way that reflects these values?

Question 3: Can you think of one thing you could do that would help you live out your values more fully?



FOUNDATIONAL CONCEPTS

CITATIONS

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