

Compassion Training

Compassion is defined by four key characteristics: “awareness of the suffering” (in one’s self or others), “caring and tender concern,” a desire to see suffering relieved, and the motivation to take action to reduce suffering (Goldin & Jazaieri, 2017). Compassion has been shown to improve resilience, emotional regulation, mental health, and relationships (Seppala et al., 2017). Compassion expressed by colleagues and school leaders has been shown to be positively linked with teacher engagement and job satisfaction and a reduction in burnout and stress (Eldor & Shoshani, 2016). Given the benefits of compassion for others and self on wellbeing, multiple compassion training programs have been developed in recent years.

The Compassion Cultivation Training (CCT) program, developed at Stanford University, is an eight-week program (one 2-hour weekly lesson) that uses principles of positive psychology, mindfulness, and neuroscience to help trainees better understand and practice compassion daily (Goldin & Jazaieri, 2017). These trainings are available in a live virtual (online) format or can be led by a psychologist with compassion training experience. See the reference section below for information about scheduling these trainings and finding a CCT qualified psychologist near you.

Mindful Schools has developed a self-compassion training program with the leading scholars in self-compassion research, specifically for teachers. This is a six-week program, also held in a live virtual format. Unlike the CCT program, this program focuses solely on developing self-compassion and reducing self-criticism, but uses many similar mindfulness-based practices. If a compassion training program is not the most feasible option for your school or district, you could invite employees to participate in a single workshop or lesson on compassion led by a licensed psychologist. You could also incorporate compassion-focused activities or loving-kindness meditations into staff meetings.

Training Resources

The Center for Compassion Focused Therapy (n.d.). Mindful compassion resources. <https://edtechbooks.org/-JnbD>

Mindful Schools. (n.d.). Self-compassion for educators. <https://edtechbooks.org/-nVTy>

Houston, E. (March 24, 2022). 12 best compassion training exercises and activities. PositivePsychology.com. <https://edtechbooks.org/-KSh>

The Center for Compassion and Altruism Research and Education (CCARE). (n.d.). Global directory for compassion teachers. <https://edtechbooks.org/-qDqI>

Compassion institute. (n.d.). Find a class. <https://edtechbooks.org/-nerr>

Materials:	Training programs (can be costly), compassion-focused meditation resources (such as the ones found here).
Duration:	Varies (typically training programs are between 6-8 weeks).
Implementation:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. After completing an assessment of your staff's wellbeing, determine if a compassion training program would be beneficial and feasible for your school. 2. Visit the additional resources section below to learn about different compassion training programs. 3. Determine when the training will be held, how often, and invite staff to attend. 4. Sign up for virtual compassion training classes or workshops, or work with a licensed psychologist to set up an in-person training with staff. 5. Invite staff to engage in compassion-focused activities or meditations.

Does it work?

In one assessment of the CCT program, 100 adults were randomly assigned to the compassion training or a waitlist condition (Jazaieri et al., 2012). Participants in the compassion training attended eight weekly, 2-hour sessions and were encouraged to engage in 15 minutes of compassion-focused practice daily, often by listening to a loving kindness guided meditation. All training classes were led by an experienced psychologist. Prior to and following the training, all participants (including those in the waitlist group) completed self-report measures of compassion for self and others. Participants who attended the trainings reported significant improvements in feeling compassion for others and self, as well as receiving compassion from others (Jazaieri et al., 2012). Compassion-focused training has also been assessed specifically for its impact on educator wellbeing. In one study, 155 public school teachers participated and were either assigned to the compassion training or a waitlist control group (Matos et al., 2022). The compassion training program used in this study is an eight-week program, similar to the CCT program, with weekly 2 hour sessions. Participants in the training group reported improvements in compassion for self and others, but also in positive affect and job satisfaction. Also, the training program was also associated with reductions in depression and anxiety, and stress and burnout (Matos et al., 2022).

References:

- Eldor, L. & Shoshani, A. (2016). Caring relationships in school staff: Exploring the link between compassion and teacher work engagement. *Teacher and Teacher Education*, 59, 126-136. <https://edtechbooks.org/-FJWI>
- Goldin, P.R. & Jazaieri, H. (2017) The compassion cultivation training (CCT) program. In E.M. Seppala, S. Simon-Thomas, S.L. Brown, M.C. Worline, C.D. Cameron & J.R. Doty (Eds.) *The Oxford handbook of compassion science* (pp. NEED PAGE NUMBERS). Oxford University Press.
- Jazaieri, H., Jinpa, G. T., McGonigal, K., Rosenberg, E. L., Finkelstein, J., Simon-Thomas, E., et al. (2012). Enhancing compassion: a randomized controlled trial of a compassion cultivation training program. *Journal of Happiness Studies*. doi:10.1007/s10902-012-9373-z. <https://edtechbooks.org/-BqQN>
- Matos, M., Albuquerque, I., Galhardo, A., Cunha, M., Lima, M.P., Palmeira, L., Petrocchi, N., McEwan, K., Maratos, F.A. & Gilbert, P. (2022). Nurturing compassion in schools: A randomized

controlled trial of the effectiveness of a compassionate mind training program for teachers. *Plos One*, 17(3). <https://edtechbooks.org/-TxRi>

Seppala, E.M., Simon-Thomas, S., Brown, S.L., Worline, M.C., Cameron, C.D. & Doty, J.R. (2017). *The Oxford handbook of compassion science*. Oxford University Press.

ADDRESSING
WELLBEING
IN SCHOOLS

*An Educator's Practical Guide to Improving
Wellbeing*

SYDNI FAWSON, MEGAN BATES AND
DAVID BOREN



Fawson, S., Bates, M., & Boren, D. M. (n.d.). *Addressing Wellbeing In Schools*. EdTech Books. https://edtechbooks.org/addressing_wellbeing