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# Compassion Informed Mindfulness For Teachers: A Case Study

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COMPASSION INFORMED MINDFULNESS for TEACHERS: A CASE STUDY

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The College of Graduate and Professional Studies

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## COMPASSION INFORMED MINDFULNESS FOR TEACHERS: A CASE STUDY

### Abstract

The professional duties of teaching can be stressful. The social pressures many teachers face beyond their work day (finances, family, career, peers, etc.) may exacerbate their feelings of work stress. Mindfulness-based practices in education show evidence they can alleviate teachers' stress. The purpose of this study was to explore the framework of compassion as informed mindfulness in the professional lives of educators. *Compassion Informed Mindfulness for Teachers* (CIMT) was an original 6-week mindfulness-based intervention protocol (90 min. per week) addressing compassion, self-compassion, common humanity, mindfulness, and resilience exclusively for educators. Analysis of data through an ethnographic case-study, supported by triangulated mixed-methodological design, suggests CIMT corroborates research supporting the efficacy of mindfulness in education. Pre-CIMT and post-CIMT analysis suggests case participants learned how to meditate, learned skills addressing self-criticism and greater self-compassion, were less over-identified with stressors, reported greater mental spaciousness and awareness, and reported less reactivity to stress. This research supports the continued and widespread use of mindfulness-based interventions in school environments. Instructing teachers and other school personnel the skills of mindfully reframing difficult interactions could have broad implications for school communities. Further recommendations for action include: instructing prominent stakeholders the pedagogical value of mindfulness and compassion; promoting CIMT as a staff developmental protocol in schools and districts; and promoting compassion and mindfulness programs in higher education, especially leadership and

credentialing programs for educators. CIMT is positioned as a protocol to research and a framework to live by.

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## Chapter One

### Introduction

Compassion integrates the personal dimension of a teacher's experience with their pedagogical craft. It is commonly accepted that teachers and administrators continue their professional lives beyond the school day. Preparing lessons, attending community events, grading, and writing reports briefly summarize their tasks after the final school bell rings. These are consuming events and behaviors which may conflict with traditional end of work-day activities: family issues, children, relationships, chores, hobbies, school, sports, friends, etc. The demands placed on teachers, living in the midst of a fast-paced society, promote the introduction of mindfulness as a way to respond to the classroom and oneself.

Effective communication skills require authentic understanding, active listening and empathic resonance. Leadership skills depicted in either classrooms or corporate boardrooms emphasize these skills. Integral to effective leadership is one's emotional balance. This is especially true in classroom settings. Perceptually, compassion seems incongruent for teachers or administrators to organize education and curriculum decisions intended for positive school outcomes. Understanding emotions and the role they play in the lives of educators is the central theme of the present study.

*Compassion Informed Mindfulness for Teachers (CIMT)* is presented as a protocol to implement and a conceptual framework to live by. Compassion viewed from a social scientific understanding reinforces a common-sense notion that being kind to self and others benefits ourselves and community. Whether compassion is a trait identified through introspection (Siegal, 2012) or a cultivated state (Jinpa, 2015; Neff, 2003a; 2003b; 2004), compassion is a response to suffering that re-orient models of leadership in business (Carrol, 2007), education (Brown & Olsen, 2015; Jennings, 2015; Rechtschaffen, 20140), power dynamics (Keltner,

2016), social and digital interactions (Chapman, 2012; Levy, 2016), and sports (Kaufmann, Glass, & Pineau, 2018). Understanding facets of emotion, such as anger, fear, trust, and shame (to list a few) and the contagion quality embedded in all relationships (Goleman, 2006; Siegal, 2012), underscores the common humanity of our existence. Everyone wishes to be loved, cared for and valued in esteem. Leadership that emphasizes compassion communicates empathy, care, and concern for the well-being of others. These are social traits which resonate in small and large group settings. Thus, compassion as a framework is situated for professional and personal experience.

Transformative leadership starts with individual leaders emphasizing the paradigm of compassion as life changing. Leadership theory relying on the historical largesse of personality (Burns, 1978) and the over-emphasis of dated behaviorism (Marion & Gonzales, 2014), fails to address a sense of shared common humanity. These models minimize emotional social connections. Compassion emphasizes an approach toward intrapersonal reflection, and interpersonal interactions with others. Compassion, situated in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, has the potential to change the lives of many (Jinpa, 2015).

Daily interactions are filled with emotional experiences. Receiving a generous smile from a colleague, student or stranger feels good. Experiences of stress and disagreement tend to activate negative emotions. Leadership actions of a teacher, manager, CEO, team captain or parent devoid of pro-social theory, i.e., forgiveness, gratitude, compassion etc., can be devoid of emotional understanding of how people think and behave (Davidson & Begley, 2012; Gilbert, 2009; Keltner, Oatley, & Jenkins, 2014; Luskin, 2002; Siegal, 2012). Given the primacy of emotions in socio-neurological investigations, little attention is paid to the emotional scaffolding inherent in teaching interactions. Fulfilling the leadership role in a classroom, a teacher's

emotional awareness and resonance toward classroom dynamics (positive and negative), model these emotional strategies to their students. Compassion as a pedagogical framework suggests the potential for teachers to re-frame ‘trigger’ points of emotions, inherent in many educational interactions.

Teaching is difficult and many teachers leave their profession before five years of service (Chang, 2009). The inability to retain teachers complicates efforts to improve student outcomes. If the current pedagogical need in education is the retention of experienced teachers (Chang, 2009), what are the conceptual models and practices in place that enhance a teacher’s experience, growth and retention?

Investigating compassion in the social sciences reflects the growth of emotion research within the past several decades. Psychologists have documented the dearth of emotion research throughout the Twentieth Century, as science grappled with its methods to capture emotion and affiliative states (Goleman, 1994). The ascendance of rigorous neuroscience fused by the framework of emotion propels the examination of prosocial dispositions (i.e., empathy, forgiveness, compassion, gratitude, etc.) This is currently demonstrated through an emergent and growing mindfulness social science, spawned primarily from the lens of positive psychology (Dweck, 2016; Fredrickson, 2013; Hanson, 2013, 2018; Keltner, 2009; Luskin, 2002; McGonigal, 2012).

The mission of most schools is to promote positive social-emotional learning climates for students. However, less attention is paid to the social-emotional needs of teachers (Flook et al., 2013; Jennings, 2015, 2015; Jennings et. al., 2017). Understanding the intricacy of compassion and self-compassion may prove valuable in the lives of educators and their students. The prosocial dimensions of mindfulness, compassion, gratitude, and forgiveness, all point toward

decreased individual stress and increased healthy well-being (Dweck, 2016; Goleman & Davidson, 2017; Hanson, 2018; Luskin, 2002).

There is growing interest in the advancement of mindfulness in education (Flook et al., 2013; Jennings, 2015; Jennings et al., 2017; Rechtschaffen, 2014). Stress is well documented in the teaching profession (Chang, 2009). Some scholars claim the professional roles of education are as stressful as those in the medical field (Jennings et al., 2017, p. 2). Jennings and colleagues capture the dilemma many educators face, in that stress is a significant factor in teaching “but little research has addressed ways to reduce it” (Jennings et al., p. 2, 2017).

### **Statement of Problem**

Teaching is stressful (Chang, 2009). Contributing to the exhaustion many educators face is a sense of always being ‘on-stage’ and the necessity of appearing ‘up-beat’ in front of their students. Also, the rapid (chronic) decision making required to orchestrate student behavior in a classroom milieu can take its toll. In most instances, teachers work separate from other adults and often feel a sense of isolation; many teach in poor and dangerous working environments; class size and excessive work demands (with modest pay) often leads to a feeling of role ambiguity, akin to ‘why am I doing this?’ (Chang, 2009).

Research on mindfulness-based practices in education shows evidence they can alleviate teachers’ stress (Flook et al., 2013; Micklejohn, et. al., 2012; Roeser et al, 2012; Taylor et al., 2016). Jennings et. al. (2017) reported significant findings related to teachers’ emotional regulation as a result of a targeted mindfulness-based intervention. Similarly, cultivating compassion is an effective practice at alleviating stress and incorporating greater resiliency in responses to everyday experiences (Hanson, 2013, 2018; Jazaieri et. al., 2012; Leary, et al., 2007; Lopez, Sanderman & Schroevers, 2016). The results of recent empiricism suggest there is



increased opportunity to explore the wider implications of compassion protocols in education settings.

This study explored the implementation of compassion as a mindfulness-oriented curriculum building upon previous mindfulness-based interventions designed for educators (Beshai, McAlpine, Weare & Kuyken, 2016; Flook et al., 2013; Jennings et al., 2017; Roeser, Skinner, Beers & Jennings, 2012). Paradoxically, mindfulness is gaining traction as a social science framework, but compassion within education settings has yet to be fully explored. From this perspective, the gap in the literature points to the feasibility of compassion as an informed pedagogical theory supporting mindfulness-based interventions for educators.

Currently, there is substantial debate about the efficacy of mindfulness in education. Some people want to teach students directly the skills of meditation and reflection, while others see the importance of teacher interventions (Jennings, 2015; Micklejohn, et. al., 2012; Rechtschaffen, 2014). Addressing teacher related stressors could have great benefits for students. For instance, research suggests “teachers who experience high levels of stress and frustration may transmit these feelings and their impacts directly to students via stress-contagion” (Wethington, 2000, p. 2, as reported in Jennings et. al., 2017). Students with teachers reporting higher levels of stress, themselves had a greater propensity for distress (Jennings et. al., 2017). Thus, improved teacher emotion regulation would benefit not only themselves, but the classroom environments in which they lead. There are limited education models teachers can access to reframe work stress.

Stress in the classroom is frequently present (Chang, 2009; Jennings, 2015; Taylor et al., 2016). Jennings and Greenberg (2009) discuss social and emotional “competencies” that foster teacher emotional regulation. These competencies include: “self-awareness of emotional states

and cognition, the ability to effectively regulate their emotions while teaching to avoid becoming emotionally depleted and [sic] maintain their emotional energy to effectively respond to students' needs" (Jennings et. al., 2017, p. 2). Classrooms with teachers who demonstrate low social and emotional competencies reflect teacher coping skills that may prove detrimental to the well-being of their students. Likewise, teachers who exhibit "high levels of social and emotional competencies" (Jennings et. al., 2017, p. 2) tend to cope more effectively within the classroom milieu (Rechtschaffen, 2014) thus providing students with appropriate models to frame frustration and everyday phenomena. Therefore, if teachers are mindful of their emotional 'trigger points' even in the midst of difficult interactions, they and others will benefit from this awareness.

Teachers demonstrate classroom agency by modeling their emotions in response to stress and other difficult interactions. Teachers who suffer stress due to frustration, negative classroom interactions, or diminished accomplishment (Jennings et. al, 2017) model negative emotional characteristics that students internalize as appropriate responses. This may complicate integration of social-emotional learning strategies for students if teachers are ill equipped themselves. If teachers model appropriate social-emotional competencies, classrooms if not entire schools, benefit from the contagion of emotional awareness.

Compassion is always a response to suffering, either one's own or others' (Jinpa, 2015; Neff, 2011). Compassion reframes negative thought patterns, excessive self-criticism, and assuages personal reactions to stress (Hanson, 2018). The underlying notion of compassion is the maxim, "just like me" (Jinpa, 2015, p. 153), that everyone experiences a range of emotions and is worthy of compassion in response to suffering.

Mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) is an established medical treatment for many physical and psychological impairments (Kabat-Zinn, 2013). MBSR is an 8-week mindfulness-based intervention (MBI) curriculum protocol addressing breath awareness, sitting meditation, body scans and yoga while mindfully handling stress, bodily discomfort, pain management, and negative thinking. Nearly all mindfulness-based intervention protocols today are derived from Kabat-Zinn's MBSR. This study promotes and extends the role of MBI's, promoting teacher well-being through the paradigm of compassion.

### **Purpose of Study**

The purpose of this study was to explore the efficacy of mindfulness in the professional lives of educators. The underlying presumption of this research was whether mindfulness, expressed as compassion and self-compassion, has the capacity to assuage a teachers' emotional experience associated with school environments. A telling feature of mindfulness is the ability to mentally and emotionally re-frame difficult or trying experiences (Chodren 2010). Training teachers awareness skills so they can recognize their emotional patterns and reactions to stressful events addresses individual coping strategies that benefit all school people. The present study specifically addresses the emotional and mental skills of teachers that promote healthy relationships, interpersonal awareness, and emotional balance.

*Compassion Informed Mindfulness for Teachers* (CIMT) is an original adaptation of compassion and self-compassion theory (Gilbert, 2009; Hanson, 2009; Jinpa, 2015; Neff, 2003a; 2003b; 2004; 2016) specifically intended for educators. CIMT is inspired by the protocol templates of MBSR (Kabat-Zinn, 2013), Compassion Cultivation Training (CCT) (Jinpa, 2015), and Mindful Self-Compassion (MSC) (Neff & Germer, 2012). CIMT was a 6-week mindfulness-based intervention protocol (90 min per week) addressing compassion, self-

compassion, common humanity, mindfulness, and resilience *exclusively* for educators. The curriculum was interactive and experientially based, providing significant opportunity for self-discovery and reflection. CIMT was similar to the MBSR protocol of meditation, breath and body awareness, but specifically highlights compassion as the primary object of intervention.

### **Research Questions**

This action research protocol was positioned as action learning in a bounded case study. Action learning highlights the “dialectic ... between theoretical knowledge and personal experience” (Austin & Bartunek, 2006, p. 113). A mixed-qualitative methodology guides the current document. The following over-arching question frames the present study: how do teachers make meaning of their classroom emotional experiences through a paradigm of mindfulness? Specifically, this research intends to explore these questions:

1. When provided the 6-week mindfulness-based intervention *Compassion Informed Mindfulness for Teachers*, what were the descriptions K-12 teachers reported in their assessment of compassion, self-compassion, and mindfulness in context to their roles as educators?
2. When provided the 6-week mindfulness-based intervention *Compassion Informed Mindfulness for Teachers*, what were the descriptions K-12 teachers reported in their levels of stress in context to their roles as educators?

### **Conceptual Framework**

Mindfulness and compassion scaffold the thesis of this essay. A rich tradition of scholarship predates mindfulness in education, advancing compassion from the traditions of Buddhist psychology. Central to the tenets of mindfulness is awareness. Paying attention to our emotional states, positive and negative without judgment, captures the idea of mindfulness.

Mindfulness can also be described as being “aware of our awareness” (A. Wallace, personal communication, October, 2018). We can also become aware we are not. The practice of insight meditation (Goldstein, 1993) promotes cultivation of compassion through breathing. Attentional, specific breathing during meditation creates spaciousness for the moment, without judging or criticizing the self. Compassion informed mindfulness brings into view the underlying premise of insight meditation: everyone suffers; suffering is largely the result of craving, attachment or excessive desire; we can become aware of our suffering; and there is a path to assuage our experience (Goldstein, 1993).

Compassion in contemporary society is greatly misunderstood (Gilbert, 2009; Goetz, Keltner & Simon-Thomas, 2010; Neff, 2004; Neff & Germer, 2012). Many people see compassion as a form of weakness that should be avoided in social interactions. From this perspective, compassion would invite others to take advantage of the good nature of others. Compassion is defined as the intent to relieve suffering, specifically that of others and oneself (Jinpa, 2015; Neff, 2004, 2011). Integral to the framework of compassion is the concept of self-compassion. Many people think compassion is others’ oriented (Neff, 2004). However, “in the Buddhist tradition, it is stressed that an individual must have compassion for the self in order to have the emotional resources available to give compassion to others” (Neff, 2004, p. 28). In order to nurture healthy relationships, it’s essential “we have to work on ourselves, on our own minds, with some seriousness ... compassion isn’t just about others, it’s also about ourselves” (Fischer, 2012, p. 95). Central to a theory of compassion is mindfulness.

Meditation practice is a physiological framework for compassion and mindfulness. The practice of insight meditation (Goldstein, 1993) frames CIMT. Compassion, self-compassion, overidentification and recognizing “shenpa” (Chodron, 2010), which is the idea of attachment or

being hooked (triggered) by unpleasant experiences, characterize insight meditation practice. Through the physiological experience of breathing and relaxation, we become aware of our mind, thus accepting each moment with-out criticizing or self-judgment. Norman Fischer (2012) captures the spirit of this practice: “there is no escaping human problems, most of which come not so much from situations and other people, as from our reactions to situations and other people” (p. 137). Meditation is a tool uniquely situated to become aware of our mind.

### **Assumptions / Limitations**

The benefits of *Compassion Informed Mindfulness for Teachers* lay in promoting calmer, less reactive and more compassionate teachers. The following research promotes an approach where teachers re-frame pedagogical stress with self-compassion. Teachers exhibiting and leading emotionally balanced classrooms promote student success and social growth. It was hypothesized students and teachers will be positively impacted through a paradigm and framework of compassion informed mindfulness for teachers. Though data collection focused exclusively on teachers, descriptions of their classrooms reflected their own emerging mindfulness practice. Compassion as a leadership and teaching model reinforces our shared understanding of common humanity. Greater emotional resilience by teachers and administrators will promote nurturing student environments in which to learn and grow (Nhat Hanh & Weare, 2017).

Teachers are in a unique position to model the benefits of meditation and mindfulness. Students look up to their teachers for guidance and inspiration. However, not all school personnel welcome the opportunity to learn self-transformative skills likely to provide lasting change. Change is risky. Even maladaptive behaviors are difficult to unseat due to the effort

required to learn new strategies and the fear of failing to accomplish what may seem intuitive by nature.

There are limits placed on the applicability of the current study. As a case study emphasizing qualitative analysis, the current research lacks the strength of double-blind, wait-list control empiricism. While a pure qualitative design may not capture the empirical strength of quantitative measurement, it provides other perspectives on participant experiences that are not evident in quantitative designs. Moreover, this study exemplified ethnographic action learning, and captured a “snapshot” of daily teacher experiences through the recorded voices of teacher participants. Additionally, capturing the actual voices of CIMT cohort participants verified the authenticity of participant research. Another limitation of the study was interpreting the responses of the CIMT cohort (size of, grade level taught, years of service, gender, and age) in relation to teachers with similar demographic characteristics. The sample used for the study informs an emergent field, but was not representative of all teachers and its relationship to current teacher populations.

Compassion is greatly misunderstood in society. However, there is growing awareness of its potential to reshape pedagogical approaches rooted in long term practice. Compassion has the potential to positively change the lives of teachers, students and school leaders in charge of their care. Only time will verify if the many initiatives supporting mindfulness and compassion will take hold in school settings. At the very least, compassion informed mindfulness instructs teachers how to assuage negative emotional experiences.

### **Rationale and Significance**

*Compassion Informed Mindfulness for Teachers* (CIMT) is valuable for teachers and students. Since emotional valence is present in all interactions, (Keltner, Oatley & Jenkins,

2014) it presupposes teachers *would be* affected by stressors inherent in a pedagogical climate. Teachers and students bring their everyday lives into the classroom. Some people have the ability to let minor stressors not affect their work or classroom performance. But over time, stress can build and take an emotional toll on the effectiveness of one's performance. Teaching teachers the skills of meditation and mindfulness will benefit instructors and have a positive impact in the classroom. Research confirms meditation changes the brain (Goleman & Davidson, 2017; Hanson, 2013; Siegal, 2012). *Compassion Informed Mindfulness for Teachers* has the potential to reframe teacher negative self-talk, address personal suffering due to stress, and promote a growth mindset (Dweck, 2016) for future success.

Schools and school districts are akin to independent islands surrounded by the social fabric of community. Change at any level is difficult to orchestrate. Change involving a personal redefinition of oneself in relation to the context of an entire organization is difficult, but not impossible. Change initiatives rarely succeed when prompted by a supervisory decree. Compassion fits this category. Many people fail to understand the power compassion has to change one's life (Jinpa, 2015; Neff, 2011). People associate compassion as being weak and ineffective at directing meaningful change. However, compassion cultivates resilience (Hanson, 2018), courage and positive mindsets (Dweck, 2016), increased compassion for oneself (Neff, 2011), and increased compassion and empathy for others (Jinpa, 2015).

A fundamental element in the process of change is personal. One reason why mindfulness initiative's struggle to gain traction, either in school settings or public arenas, is the very personal nature of self-reflection. It's hypothesized teachers are unwilling to admit they struggle in the classroom due to stress and accumulated life events. For many teachers such an admission could perpetuate a spiral of negativity that becomes difficult to address. School



leaders keen on improving test scores, improving discipline and reducing student absenteeism, often fail to address the emotional needs of teachers within the purview of professional conduct. This is a mistake. Teachers are highly vulnerable to self-criticism, social disdain and very difficult working conditions. Providing the skill sets required to maintain a mature balance between stress and professional growth is vital for the classroom. *Compassion Informed Mindfulness for Teachers* could be a pivotal tool to assuage and reframe the very difficult work of classroom pedagogy.

There are many benefits of compassion as they relate to improved physical and emotional health: lowered stress, less reactivity, less critical self-talk, increased mindfulness, and increased self-compassion (Goleman & Davidson, 2017; Hanson, 2013, 2018; Neff, 2011). Leadership skills (including those demonstrated by teachers) with compassion as a framework, promote mindful colleagues (students) who “sharpen skillful intelligence and deepen the tender warmth by contemplating the four immeasurables: respect, genuine caring, delight and impartiality” (Carroll, 2007, p. 134). Additionally, compassion supports community of practice in which everyone is held in esteem and all stakeholders are valued for their personal contribution. Shwarz emphasizes “compassion leads people to avoid focusing on blame when things are implemented in a way that creates unintended consequences” (Shwarz, 2006, p. 417). In essence, compassion derives from an outlook in which everyone is viewed “just like me” (Jinpa, 2015, p. 153).

### **The Researcher**

With a career spanning 32 years in secondary public schools, this researcher was intrigued by the growth of mindfulness in education. Teachers, students, and parents (people everywhere) bring their personal emotional lives to moment to moment interactions.

Professional and personal experiences propelled the following inquiry of compassion in education. Rarely do schools prioritize teacher emotional well-being when addressing student performance and achievement. However, this author was currently positioned to implement *Compassion Informed Mindfulness for Teachers* within a suburban school district located in the greater Bay Area, CA. This event in itself was rare, and suggests the emerging importance of mindful social-emotional competencies in school settings. Action research has a long tradition in schools, but exploring the role of compassion in the lives of educators suggests a novel approach.

### **Definition of Terms**

*Compassion.* Compassion refers to a specific feeling of wanting to relieve the suffering of self or others (Jinpa, 2015). “Compassion is sympathy for others specifically in the case of their suffering. Although it is uncomfortable, we are willing to feel the suffering of others and to do something about it when we can, even if all we can do is be with them” (Fisher, 2012, p. 11).  
*Empathy.* Empathy is considered a feeling of shared emotions, or an understanding of how others may feel given similar circumstances. Ricard (2013) distinguishes several features of empathy: “knowing another person’s internal state; emotional resonance; intuiting or projecting oneself into another’s situation; and imagining how another person is thinking and feeling” (Ricard, 2013, p. 46-48).

*Mindfulness.* Mindfulness is the ability to recognize the relationality of our experience. Being mindful is noticing what our mind is doing at any given time. Mindfulness is the essence of moment to moment awareness or paying attention on purpose. Specifically, mindfulness promotes the acceptance of “unfolding experience, moment by moment” non-judgmentally (Kabat-Zinn, 1990, 2013).

*Prosocial emotions.* Emotions that support familiarity, warmth and social connection: gratitude, forgiveness, compassion, love, empathy, altruism, happiness and mindfulness.

*Self-compassion.* Feelings of compassion directed at oneself is the core of self-compassion. Self-compassion is the ability to treat ourselves in a similar fashion as we would for someone we deeply care about, who is experiencing pain or emotions and warmth in times of distress and emotional upset. (Neff, 2011).

*Mindfulness-based intervention (MBI).* MBI's are specific protocols derived from the work of Jon Kabat-Zinn's foundational Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction. MBSR is an eight-week protocol emphasizing breathing, meditation, body awareness, yoga and related contemplative exercises. The expectation is each client takes personal responsibility of their own body awareness through daily meditation and homework practices.

*Compassion Informed Mindfulness for Teachers (CIMT).* CIMT is an original and specific adaptation of traditional MBI's proposing compassion as the object of intervention. CIMT is a 6-week protocol addressing compassion at the center of its mindfulness curriculum. The following topics addressed are: 1) mindful awareness, stability and spaciousness; 2) cultivating loving-kindness; 3) cultivating compassion for another; 4) cultivating loving-kindness for self; 5) cultivating compassion for self; and 6) compassion informed mindfulness in the classroom.

## **Conclusion**

Change is uneven and often comes about with unforeseen consequences. Classrooms and schools which embrace mindfulness and compassion as leadership and pedagogical approaches contribute toward prosocial consequences that positively promote well-being within the fabric of society. Since teachers have great agency in the lives of children, promoting social-emotional

skills such as compassion, model positive coping strategies that benefit everyone. The purpose of this study was to address the gap in the literature informing compassion as a personal and pedagogical framework. Building on previous mindfulness-based interventions for educators, CIMT focused specifically on the wellbeing of teachers. Mindfulness-based interventions, specifically Compassion Cultivation Training (CCT-CCARE) demonstrate that compassion and self-compassion promote emotional regulation and lowered levels of stress (Jazaieri et. al., 2012). It was hypothesized CIMT would demonstrate an effective protocol for teachers to manage day to day stress inherent in their teaching craft. Conceptually, compassion is always a response to suffering. Does it matter if it's work-related, personal affliction, social ostracism or some other debilitating emotion difficult to process? The evidence pointing to mindfulness and compassion as genuine models in the domain of leadership, education and business, points to a new era of social science. Compassion awareness promotes coping skills teachers can utilize any moment of the day. Teachers and leaders who embrace compassion and moment to moment awareness lead nurturing school environments (Nhat Hanh & Weare, 2017). These environments are valued by students, parents and teachers working toward personal fulfillment and success.

## Chapter Two

### Review of the Literature

Training teachers' awareness skills which recognize their emotional patterns and reactions to stressful events, addresses individual coping strategies that benefit all school people. The present study specifically addressed the emotional and mental skills of teachers that promote healthy relationships, interpersonal awareness, and emotional balance. Integral to this approach is an understanding of compassion through the paradigm of mindfulness. Compassion in contemporary society is difficult to grasp and understand (Goetz, Keltner & Simon-Thomas, 2010; Jinpa, 2015; Neff, 2004, 2011; Ricard, 2013). Many people view compassion as a form of weakness that should be avoided in social interactions. From this perspective, compassion invites others to take advantage of the good natured-ness of others. However, evidence suggests compassion has the ability to "transform our lives" (Jinpa, 2015).

The layout of the present chapter highlights several connected themes surrounding mindfulness, compassion and education. Addressed first is an introduction to mindfulness and compassion, then followed by a discussion of social-emotional learning and pro-social behavior. Next, a look at compassion and self-compassion research and its growth into education settings frame a discussion surrounding stress and teacher burnout. Lastly, implications of compassion research in education and concluding remarks scaffold the literature-review of *Compassion Informed Mindfulness for Teachers*.

### Introduction

The practice of mindfulness, rooted in Buddhist psychology, defines compassion as the intent to relieve suffering, specifically that of others and oneself (Allen & Leary, 2010; Jinpa, 2015; Neff, 2003a, 2003b, 2004, 2009, 2011; Neff & Germer, 2012; Neff, Kirkpatrick & Rude,

2007). Integral to the framework of compassion is the concept of self-compassion. Many people think compassion is specifically related to an orientation directed toward others (Neff, 2004). However, “in the Buddhist tradition, it is stressed that an individual must have compassion for the self in order to have the emotional resources available to give compassion to others” (Neff, 2004, p. 28). Additionally, compassion is intimately woven into the discourse of many world religions, thus complicating its position as a secular framework for learning, leadership and education settings.

Agreement exists schools should promote social-emotional learning climates for all students to successfully engage with appropriate curriculum. However, very little attention has been paid to the social-emotional needs of teachers (Flook et al., 2013; Jennings, 2015, 2015; Jennings et. al., 2017). Understanding the role of compassion, specifically self-compassion may prove valuable to health professionals, first-responders and educators. Specifically, the prosocial dimensions of mindfulness, compassion, gratitude, and empathy all point toward decreased individual stress and increased healthy well-being (Dweck, 2016; Goleman & Davidson, 2017; Hanson, 2018).

There is growing interest in the advancement of mindfulness in education (Flook et al., 2013; Jennings, 2015; Jennings et al., 2017; Rechtschaffen, 2014). Similarly, mindfulness-based interventions have shown significant improvement with patient health outcomes in medical treatments, specifically stress reduction (Jazaieri et. al., 2012; Kabat-Zinn, 2013). Stress is well documented in the teaching profession (Chang, 2009). Some scholars posit that professional roles of education are as stressful as those in the medical field (Jennings et al., 2017, p. 2). Jennings and colleagues capture the dilemma many educators face, in that stress is a significant

factor in teaching “but little research has addressed ways to reduce it” (Jennings et al., p. 2, 2017).

Research positions a framework of compassion within the context of mindfulness and meditation (Jazaieri et. al., 2012; Neff, 2004; Neff & Germer 2012). Jazaieri et. al. (2012) researched the efficacy of a 9-week Compassion Cultivation Training (CCT) program, measuring emotional traits of compassion. They questioned whether compassion can cultivate emotional states of well-being. Jazaieri et al. claim significant results from the CCT protocol. These authors assert participants showed “improvement” with compassion towards others, receiving compassion from others, and improved feelings of self-compassion (Jazaieri et. al., 2012). This particular study included 100 adults, randomly selected to participate in a 9-week CCT meditation protocol and / or a waitlist control group. The CCT training was conducted by skilled meditation teachers from Stanford University’s Center for Compassion and Altruism Research and Education (CCARE). These teachers had a combined 39 years of meditation experience and 25 years teaching meditation. Developed by Geshe Thupten Jinpa, Ph.D., Compassion Cultivation Training (CCT) focuses on four elements: 1) an awareness of suffering; 2) empathetic concern for others, in which we are emotionally moved by suffering; 3) a wish to see the relief of suffering (intention); and 4) a willingness to relieve suffering (Jinpa, 2015).

Many scholars equate mindful meditation practice and compassion on similar footing (Germer, 2009; Gilbert, 2009; Neff, 2004, 2011). Even though mindfulness practices are gaining popularity in leadership, education, sports and health related fields (Brown & Olsen, 2015; Carroll, 2007; Kabat-Zinn, 2018), compassion as a framework has yet to penetrate mainstream society, leaving a powerful concept unexplored. Leadership, whether from the boardroom or the classroom, is dependent on the emotional responses of leaders and constituents. Leaders,

coaches and teachers who are unresponsive to the emotional and psychological needs of their clients (and students) find themselves in the position of dictating task management devoid of personal investment. Meaning, the emotional resonance of a leader (teacher) clarifies to the follower (student) that he or she is not just a ‘part of the machine.’

Leaders and teachers who build positive relationships, will in most instances generate a spirit of cooperation with their workers (and students). Compassion as a leadership dynamic communicates to others a quality of “just like me” (Jinpa, 2015, p. 158). In addition, compassion has the potential to alleviate stress and suffering for the individual leader. Through meditation practices that focus on the well-being of self, self-compassion underscores the need for leaders to carefully analyze their own efficacy (Neff, 2011). Contemporary society verifies that we as a group, particularly in Western culture (Jinpa, 2015) tend to be much more critical of ourselves than on others. This has the effect of promoting negative emotional states and negative thinking. Leadership dynamics which fail to address individual emotional reactions, fail to address the emotional state of particular groups being led. Often times, the most compassionate model of leadership is to confront issues down the middle and head-on.

### **Social-Emotional Learning**

In many public and private settings, the climate of a group often resembles the emotional characteristics of the leader (Keltner, 2016). Emotional and social intelligence (Goleman, 1994; 2006) mark a delicate balance between leaders and their constituents. This is true for school teachers as it is for corporate executives. At the heart of communication and leadership skill is an understanding of emotional contagion between leaders and the group they are entrusted to lead (Keltner, 2016). Social-emotional frameworks demonstrate responsible decision making, self-awareness, self-management, and relationship skills. Social-emotional learning (SEL)



curriculum enhances social awareness, making lasting impressions on students and teachers (Gueldner & Feuerborn, 2016). However, it remains unclear how long any perceived change of student behavior is the result of SEL curriculum or other factors. Thus, educators attempting to bridge the gap from SEL curriculum to prosocial behavior stand to benefit from the multidisciplinary field of contemplative neuroscience (Goleman & Davidson, 2017).

Social and emotional learning frames the discussion of education for the past 20 years (Gueldner & Feuerborn, 2012). The hallmark of SEL curriculum is developing student “self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making” (CASEL, 2014, as reported in Gueldner & Feuerborn, 2016, p. 166). Gueldner & Feuerborn (2016) emphasize the logic of teaching mindfulness strategies as a component of SEL in the classroom, suggesting “a natural fit” between SEL and mindfulness (p. 166). These authors propose practices that support contemplative activity at the beginning and end of each lesson, in order to promote “calm, focus, and enhanced awareness of experience,” (Gueldner & Feuerborn, 2016, p. 169). This has the effect of hardwiring these experiences in our neural structure (Hanson, 2013). Gueldner & Feuerborn (2016) report inconsistency in the literature about the length and duration of meditation practices, and what specific mindfulness-based practices show greater effects as intervention models in classroom settings. However, these authors assert mindfulness-based practices in education could “have a subsequent and beneficial impact on K-12 students vis-a-vis their more mindful, compassionate, and confident teachers” (Gueldner & Feuerborn, 2016, p. 173).

### **Prosocial Behavior**

An understanding of compassion and its efficacy in education must start with a review of prosocial behavior. Paradoxically, prosocial dispositions also include punishment. A working

definition of prosocial behavior can be summed up as follows: specific positive (care) and negative (punishment) dispositions which promote group and individual fitness (Boehm, 2012; Kitcher, 2011; Wilson, 2012). The origins of prosocial behavior have its evolutionary roots in early mammalian nesting environments (Boehm, 2012; Wilson, 2012). Primatologists agree our closest human relatives, the great apes and chimpanzees, exhibit a vast range of prosocial behavior, intended to promote group cohesion and safety (de Waal, 2009; Hrdy, 2009). The key to understanding prosocial dispositions is the role empathy plays in mammalian evolution (Hrdy, 2009). A modern conception of empathy is “to be concerned by the fate of others” and “consider their situation attentively, to adopt their point of view and to realize what you would feel if you were in the same situation” (Ricard, 2013, p. 43).

All mammals (and most birds) care for their young offspring until they are physically fit to endure the rigors of species existence. Humans are unique in that parental care extends well into late childhood and beyond (Diamond, 1992, Hrdy, 2009). This type of nesting behavior, referred to as “eusociality,” may be the origin of empathic emotion, love, altruism, and compassion in addition to aggression, and protecting behaviors which threaten survival (Wilson, 2012). Compassion from a prosocial perspective is the “feeling that arises in witnessing another’s suffering and that motivates a subsequent desire to help” (Goetz, Keltner & Simon-Thomas, 2010, p. 351).

### **Compassion**

Compassion as a framework for social and personal health is greatly misunderstood in contemporary society (Germer, 2009; Gilbert, 2009; Jinpa, 2015; Neff, 2011). Compassion is a distinct emotional state, with behaviors that are opposite from other emotional states, such as “distress, sadness, and love” (Goetz, Keltner & Simon-Thomas, 2010, p. 351 & 355).

Contemporary scholarship positions compassion within an evolutionary framework of human social growth. Research suggests compassion confirms its social role “because it enables cooperative relations with non-kin” (Goetz, Keltner & Simon-Thomas, 2010, p. 354; Hrdy, 2009). This is a significant underpinning of prosocial emotions. Goetz and her colleagues (2010) assert in their evolutionary argument “individuals will favor enduring relationships with more agreeable, compassionate individuals because this emotional trait predicts increased cooperative, trustworthy behavior and mutually beneficial exchanges.” Paradoxically, it is in our own best interest to be compassionate towards others, as it benefits ourselves.

The awareness of compassion is a sincere desire to alleviate the suffering of others, including oneself. From an evolutionary perspective, compassion enhances kin-selection (Smith, 1958) as it contributes to the eusocial mix of mammalian nesting patterns (Wilson, 2012). From a social point of view, compassion is a link to our common humanity (Hrdy, 2009). It is helpful to understand that everyone suffers, experiences emotions and would prefer loving relationships than not. The following encompasses a working definition of compassion (R. Cussick, personal communication, June 22, 2016; Jinpa, 2015):

1. Cognitive awareness. Knowing someone is suffering, including self;
2. Emotional affect. Feeling empathy and emotional connection towards others;
3. A wish to alleviate suffering / intent;
4. Action and motivation to relieve suffering.

Compassion cultivation could have the potential to “transform our lives” (Jinpa, 2015). Thupten Jinpa, member of Stanford University Center for Compassion and Altruism Research and Education, (CCARE) instructs a protocol of Compassion Cultivation Training (CCT) in *A Fearless Heart. How the courage to be compassionate can transform our lives* (2015). From the

context of Buddhist psychology, he explores the many ways compassion can be integrated into our daily lives. Specifically addressing the suffering of others in the context of “just like me” (p. 153). Jinpa personalizes and extends the shared concept of our common humanity. Everyone experiences similar emotions. We all suffer. A theory of ‘just like me’ grounds individual stress and trauma in the context of shared experience, rather than being isolated from others.

Grounded in evolutionary and contemporary social science and based on his experience of practicing monk (and translator to the Dalai Lama), Jinpa’s analysis refocuses the cultivation of compassion as if building a “compassionate muscle” (Jinpa, 2015, p. 63). Compassion is always a response to suffering. Jinpa highlights the preponderance in our modern age for negative self-talk. It is generally the case we are much harder on ourselves than others. This has the potential to affect our relationships with others and our own mental stability. The thrust of Jinpa’s theory is to train our minds by applying meditative skills to recognize compassion, to promote compassion for others and recognize self-compassion. Similar in scope to Kabat-Zinn’s mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR), Jinpa’s training is different by specifically addressing compassion as the object of mindfulness-based intervention.

### **Self-Compassion**

Self-compassion is an unexplored dimension in contemporary society (Allen & Leary, 2010; Jinpa, 2015; Neff, 2004, 2016). Many believe compassion is a sign of weakness and shouldn’t be attributed to positive affiliative states. Kristen Neff (2009) explains the emotional health benefits of self-compassion that allow a reactive mind to be consoled by gentle personal responses. Central to the theory of self-compassion is compassion itself. Neff (2004) explains “people usually think of having compassion for others, but in the Buddhist tradition, it is stressed that an individual must have compassion for the self in order to have the emotional resources

available to give compassion to others” (p. 28). Since all beings suffer, compassion is a response to suffering, including our own. Neff asserts there are no distinctions between compassion and self-compassion, as they are literally the same concept. In this sense, “compassion occurs when you are touched by the suffering of another, when you let someone else’s pain in to your heart rather than ignoring it or avoiding it” (Neff, 2004 p. 28).

Self-compassion as a topic of study is finding a robust research response (Kirby, Tellegen & Steindl, 2017; Leary et al., 2007; Neff & Germer, 2012). However, many confuse self-compassion with self-pity. Self-pity tends to take the characterization that one’s troubles are solely unique to themselves. Kristin Neff explains that self-pity is evidenced by individuals who “get carried away with their feelings and over dramatize them.” Neff clarifies that “in contrast, self-compassion increases one’s own sense of connection with others because it involves seeing one’s experience in light of common human experience, while simultaneously providing greater objectivity and perspective” (Neff, 2004, p. 31).

A framework of compassion instructs that one treat themselves as kindly as though you would others. According to Neff’s self-compassion theory, (Neff, 2003a, 2003b, 2004, 2011, 2016) three features stand out:

- a) extending kindness and understanding to the self in instances of pain or failure, rather than harsh judgement and self-criticism; b) seeing one’s experiences as part of the larger human experience rather than seeing them as separating and isolating; and c) holding one’s painful thoughts and feelings in mindful awareness rather than over-identify with them. (Neff, 2004, p. 30)

The 26-item Self-Compassion Scale (SCS) by Kristen Neff “explores the relationship between self-compassion and other important psychological processes” (Neff, 2003a, p. 244).

Measuring self-compassion adds to a growing literature surrounding prosocial behavior. Neff affirms that the usefulness of the SCS “may be related to psychological functioning [that] has to do with the clarity and accuracy of self-appraisals” (Neff, 2003a, p. 244). Given that the pedagogical life of most teachers is spent primarily in isolation of other educators, appraising one’s sense of efficacy in the classroom through self-compassion may prove beneficial to teachers and students alike. In this sense, teachers could gain valuable knowledge about their emotional experiences “to realize the extent to which they lack self-compassion” (Neff, 2003a, p. 244).

Controversy surrounds the investigation of self-esteem vs. self-compassion (Neff, 2004, 2009). The difference between self-esteem and self-compassion is that self-esteem requires one make “evaluations of competence and self-worth” (Neff, 2004, p. 31). Research pertaining to self-esteem reveals that “high self-esteem has been linked to putting others down to feel better about the self; [high self-esteem] increased prejudice towards out groups; [high self-esteem was] associated with violence against those perceived to threaten the ego; and people with high self-esteem often overrate their competencies” (Neff, 2004, p. 32). A key feature of self-compassion suggests feeling good about oneself is not dependent upon a feeling that one is socially better than someone else.

Understanding the skills of open heartedness, open mindedness, and loving-kindness create the emotional space for compassion and self-compassion to emerge (A. Wallace, personal communication, April 14, 2016). Self-compassion emphasizes a loving-kindness response by the individual suffering. In many ways, our brain does not care where compassion originates, as long as it soothes an anxious or worried state of mind (Hanson, 2013, 2018). Neff further elaborates self-compassion should be easier to raise than self-esteem, “since self-compassion

doesn't require that you adopt an unrealistic view of yourself" (Neff, 2004, p. 32). Other researchers corroborate Neff's analysis. Leary et al. (2007) suggests the positive characteristics of self-compassion are distinctive, in that "self-compassionate people do not appear to involve the hubris, narcissism, or self-enhancing illusions that characterize many people who possess high self-esteem" (p. 887).

### **Mindfulness and Compassion in Education**

Mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) is an established medical treatment for many physical and psychological impairments (Kabat-Zinn, 2013). MBSR is an 8-week protocol through the application of breath awareness, sitting meditation, body scans and yoga addressing pain management, and negative thinking while mindfully handling stress and bodily discomfort. Nearly all mindfulness-based intervention protocols are derived from Kabat-Zinn's MBSR.

Mindfulness-based interventions demonstrate positive trends in alleviating teachers' stress. (Flook et al., 2013; Jennings et al., 2017; Roeser et al, 2012). A recent study conducted by Patricia Jennings and colleagues (2017) employed a random control method integrating a mindfulness-based intervention (MBI) strategy in the professional development of 224 elementary teachers in New York City. Jennings et al. (2017) report significant results on emotion regulation, mindfulness, psychological distress and time urgency in 4 out of 5 domains studied, teaching efficacy being the lone exception. These researchers speculate baseline levels of teaching efficacy between control groups were initially robust. Specifically, "compared with teachers in the control group, at the end of the school year intervention teachers showed higher levels of adaptive emotion regulation and mindfulness and lower levels of psychological distress and time urgency" (Jennings et al., 2017, p. 12).

Currently, there are few studies on mindfulness-based interventions for teachers. However, the field is growing. A Google search of *mindfulness in schools* reflects a vibrant community dedicated to improving teacher and student learning outcomes. At the heart of many of these programs is the relationship between social-emotional learning and the application of prosocial dispositions. Current research into the efficacy of prosocial behavior acknowledges these behaviors can be learned and cultivated (Dweck, 2016; Hanson, 2013, 2018). A protocol of mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) demonstrates the effectiveness of cultivating mind training to assuage stress and other health concerns represented in the general population (Kabat-Zinn, 2013). A similar theory has been proposed by Flook et. al., (2013) as they attempted to replicate a protocol based MBSR for teachers. The pilot study's tentative results showed promise of mindfulness-based interventions for educators in reducing stress, while promoting greater efficacy in their craft (Flook et al., 2013).

### **Teacher Stress & Burnout**

There are serious reasons teachers leave their profession, often early in their careers (Chang, 2009; Jennings et. al., 2017). As many as 25 % of new teachers leave the profession by their 3<sup>rd</sup> year and nearly 40% leave teaching by the end of their 5<sup>th</sup> year (Chang, 2009). According to the American Psychological Association (Science Letter, 2009) 3 out of 4 American workers report having moderate to high stress, and job stress is reported to be the leading cause of stress for American workers (American Institute of Stress). Teachers are not immune to the challenges of stress in the performance of their duties. Worldwide, approximately “25 – 33% of teachers suffer significantly from stress” (Chang, 2009, p. 194). Germany for instance, documents less than 10% of teachers remain in their profession until retirement (Chang, 2009). There are limited studies that chronicle the “emotional aspects of teachers’ lives” in



relation to underlying stress prevalent in nearly all educational interactions (Chang, 2009, p. 195).

Effective coping strategies during stressful events often determine one's emotional health. Some people have greater agency at rolling with the moment, with either positive or negative experiences. The concept of "positive cognitive restructuring" entails "changing one's view of a stressful situation in order to see it in a more positive light" (Allen & Leary, 2010, p. 109). This suggests we can alter our perceptions of events to enhance emotional stability. Specifically, individuals who show greater self-compassion tend not to over-identify with negative events, thus re-casting their emotional frames of reference. With a broader understanding of mindful awareness and the resiliency of compassion theory, teachers could benefit in their personal lives and careers. The benefit of understanding prosocial dispositions in education is the emotional contagion such behaviors exhibit. Teachers who demonstrate an ability to respond to personal stress model effective coping strategies for their students. Meditation and mindful awareness are such strategies that allow individuals to reframe stress, trauma and self-rumination (Hanson, 2018; Kabat-Zinn, 2013; Neff, Kirkpatrick & Rude, 2007; Neff & Germer, 2012).

Teachers "are an important element in students' lives" and "teachers are arguably the most important agents for the cultivation and promotion of health" (Beshai et al., 2016, p. 198). An argument can be made for the necessity for teachers to employ a personal mindfulness practice "to be [sic] better equipped to teach their students" (p. 206). Since teachers have such agency in students' lives, introducing mindfulness may promote healthy well-being for all school personnel. Beshai et al. (2016) emphasize that when teaching mindfulness to students, teachers must demonstrate competence in their own mindful practice. Drawing from a small sample size,

Beshai and colleagues report “significant” findings related to lowered stress, and increased mindfulness for teachers who participated in a mindfulness-based intervention. These authors suggest mindfulness-based strategies are “feasible, acceptable and efficacious in helping secondary teachers and staff to reduce stress” (Beshai et al., 2016, p. 207).

Stress affects individual teachers, their colleagues and students who come into contact with emotionally burdened educators (Sharp & Jennings, 2016). Sharp and Jennings advocate mindfulness strategies which promote exemplars to reframe difficult emotions, “as the inability to regulate one’s emotion in response to classroom stressors may be linked to burnout” (Sharp & Jennings, 2016, p. 210). Roeser et al. (2012) emphasize the importance of emotional regulation of teachers as contributing factors that influence teacher well-being and effective pedagogical delivery. Employing mindfulness-based strategies along the lines of MBSR (Kabat-Zinn, 2013), teachers can access intervention models which cultivate emotional well-being, therefore promoting healthy “habits of mind” (Roeser et al., 2012, p. 170). Current research suggests mindfulness-based intervention strategies show promise alleviating educator stress, while promoting positive emotional outcomes (Flook et. al., 2013; Jennings et al., 2017).

### **Implications for Education**

Integrating mindfulness meditation and social emotional learning dynamics represent a new frontier for education. Contemporary neuroscience lends credence to this point of view. Even though many people appear eager to learn mindfulness (Suttie, 2017), mindfulness and contemplative practices are relatively new topics in education settings. From the inception of MBSR protocols in the late 20th Century, many people have intuitively gravitated toward MBSR as a treatment modality due its non-invasive nature. Why should educators be immune to such protocols?

Feelings of depersonalization, diminished accomplishment, and emotional overload are frequent markers within the context of teacher stress and burnout (McCormick & Burnett, 2010). Jennings and colleagues (2017) summarize findings as recent as 2013, which report 59% of teachers being “under great stress” (p. 1). Competing claims in the literature address methods how to alleviate teacher stress. Research suggests if teachers handle student misbehavior more effectively, they will experience less stress (McCormick & Burnett, 2010). From a mindfulness and compassion orientation, this approach seems ill-fitted to the emotions of teachers due to classroom experiences, or other types of trauma. Not all stress related phenomena can be attributed to student behavior. It’s entirely possible outside school influences may prove equally problematic, affecting teaching efficacy.

Cultivating compassion is compatible with desiring to address classroom management problems. Mindfulness-based compassion strategies intended for teachers struggling with management issues would be very well suited to address their stress levels. For example, compassion cultivation could be a valuable tool for teachers, acting as a foundation from which to address student deportment.

Teachers taught active meditation practices show greater resilience as measured by stress levels than educators not instructed (Jennings et. al., 2017). A review of mindfulness research over the past 40 years (Goleman & Davidson, 2017) reveals the following about meditation and contemplative practices:

1. Improves our ability to handle stress;
2. Increases our compassion and concern for others;
3. Improves our ability to focus and pay attention;
4. Enhances our relationship with others and our surrounding environments (Suttie, 2017).

The implications for education are profound. Teachers have greater classroom agency by modeling their emotions in response to stress and other difficult interactions. Human relationships are characterized by the emotional resonance of others (Goleman, 2006; Keltner, Oatley & Jenkins, 2014; Siegel, 2015). Teachers who suffer stress due to frustration, negative classroom interactions, or diminished accomplishment (Jennings, et al., 2017) model negative emotional characteristics in which students internalize as appropriate responses. This may complicate integration of social-emotional learning strategies for students, if teachers are ill equipped themselves.

A vibrant and growing nomenclature surrounds mindfulness and classroom settings. Although in its infancy, this nomenclature includes pre-teacher training programs (Brown, 2017; Kerr, et al., 2017; Lucas & Kerr, 2016). Teaching meditation skills for the well-being of teachers populates the theme of this essay. Neuroscience confirms our brain changes with experience (Damasio, 1994) and there is growing interest related to the lasting effects of meditation within education. Contemporary scholars emphasize that “using contemplative practices in educational settings could both complement and add value” to the traditional programs currently in place in many schools (MLERN & Davidson, et al., 2015, p. 150). Davidson et al. (2015) verify that “at heart of such practices [meditation] is repetition and practice to cultivate more positive habits of mind” (MLERN & Davidson, et al., 2015, p. 150). Repetition and habit create the conditions that reinforce neural connections, in effect hardwiring our emotional responses (Hanson, 2013). Research points toward the efficacy of mindfulness, supporting the well-being of teachers through thoughtful contemplative practice (MLERN & Davidson, et al., 2015).

Mindfulness research connects neuroscientific investigation and education phenomena. However, there is an absence of research investigating compassion as a mindfulness-based intervention strategy for teachers in education settings. In contrast, there are many studies addressing the characteristics of mindfulness in classroom settings. This seemingly incongruent pattern of research may be temporary, as the efficacy of meditation, mindfulness and compassion have penetrated the nomenclature of social science and education particularly. Continuing research on the efficacy of mindfulness-based intervention strategies provide a robust framework to investigate the social and emotional health of teachers and society at large.

### **Conclusion**

A review of the literature reveals a vibrant and growing nomenclature surrounding mindfulness and compassion. Particularly, mindfulness and education demonstrate a genuine fit within a discussion of social-emotional learning and pro-social behavior. Understanding the role of compassion and self-compassion in the daily lives of teachers could alleviate symptoms of teacher stress and burn-out. Mindfulness research, theory and literature are robust examples of influential social science.

Studies of meditation, contemplative practice and compassion have reached a watershed moment. Rigorous neuro and social science confirm the efficacy of meditation and mindfulness-based interventions in contemporary society. Growing evidence suggests MBI protocols could have profound implications in education settings. The purpose of this research was to explore the characteristics of teachers who develop a mindfulness (meditation) practice, with compassion as the object of intervention, while observing possible effects in their classrooms. Since the aim of mindfulness-based interventions is to assuage and reframe personal stress or trauma, it is

plausible to expect lowered levels of teacher stress and more compassionate classroom settings due to teacher mindfulness-based compassion interventions.

The implications for society and education in general are profound. What if all graduate schools of education taught prospective teachers the value of meditation as required training for a career in education? Consider the many students and families who would benefit from teachers who show greater skill at responding to personal stress and trauma, rather than habitually over-identifying to perceived unpleasant experiences. School leaders, who by their own meditation practices, may resonate with the larger school community through an authentic display of mindfulness and compassion. Compassion cultivation training for teachers is not a luxury or fad. It is a vital construct with serious repercussions for teachers and students alike. More research is needed in order to clarify how the framework of compassion and self-compassion are related to classroom settings. Teachers and students alike will benefit socially and emotionally through a paradigm of compassion informed mindfulness.

## **Chapter Three**

### **Methodology**

Training teachers' awareness skills so they can recognize their emotional patterns and reactions to stressful events provides individuals with coping strategies that benefit all school people. The present study specifically addresses the emotional and mental skills of teachers that promote healthy relationships, interpersonal awareness, and emotional balance. The methodological structure of Compassion Informed Mindfulness (CIMT) is grounded in the framework of compassion and participant action research (Creswell, 2015). Conceptually, action science (Raelin, 2006) provides the additional model in which "people can improve their interpersonal and organizational effectiveness by exploring hidden beliefs that drive their actions" (Raelin, 2006, p. 203). Action science emphasizes the role of "helping learners increase their effectiveness in social situations through heightened awareness of the assumptions behind their actions and interactions" (Raelin, 2006, p. 204). Compassion as a pedagogical model positions itself as authentic learning requiring teachers to investigate their own hidden beliefs.

Participant action research (PAR) demonstrates a personal methodological approach to social science. CIMT was explored through the paradigm of an ethnographic instrumental bounded case study (Merriam, 2009). PAR is well suited to educational environments, in that the action learning taking place is meant to empower teachers as "an emancipatory aim" (Creswell, 2015, p. 585). Mindfulness-based interventions are congruent with PAR processes, and compliment participant action research: they are social, attuned with self and others; they exhibit voluntary participation that is "practical and collaborative;" and, they bring about individual change (Creswell, 2015, p. 585-86).

A grounded theory of compassion provides the framework for this mixed-method qualitative study. The central tenet of the study was whether a construct of compassion and self-compassion can be detected after teacher participation in a specific MBI protocol. The following over-arching question frames the present study: how do teachers make meaning of their classroom emotional experiences through a paradigm of mindfulness? Specifically, this research explored the following:

1. When provided the 6-week mindfulness-based intervention *Compassion Informed Mindfulness for Teachers*, what were the descriptions K-12 teachers reported in their assessment of compassion, self-compassion, and mindfulness in context to their roles as educators?
2. When provided the 6-week mindfulness-based intervention *Compassion Informed Mindfulness for Teachers*, what were the descriptions K-12 teachers reported in their levels of stress in context to their roles as educators?

### **Setting**

The setting for this case study was a suburban Bay Area, CA, unified school district serving approximately 6000 students. The district encompasses 12 schools, (including one comprehensive high school) employing approximately 400 teachers. Demographically, the student population of the district is culturally diverse. The following chart (School Year 2017 / 2018) reflects the ethnic profile of the district in which the CIMT case originated (CA Dept. of Education, 2018).

Table 1. District Ethnic Profile

African-American	American-Indian	Asian-American.	Filipino-American.	Hispanic / Latino	Pacific Islander	White	Mixed races	Not reported
2.5	.9	2.7	1.1	46.9	.3	39.9	5.2	.8



## Participants

The curriculum of *Compassion Informed Mindfulness for Teachers* (CIMT) was the original work of the author of this study. To eliminate bias and promote the gathering of authentic data, a highly qualified instructor to teach the 6-week CIMT protocol was recruited from a local Bay Area state university (Appendix E).

The population of this case study was 9 secondary educators, bounded through the employment of a suburban Northern California school district. An invitation to participate in CIMT was advertised through district email the week of December 17, 2018. Follow-up requests to participate in the form of a brochure and email were distributed to all school district teachers the first week of January, 2019. It was anticipated 10 to 20 teachers would participate out of a district pool of over 400 teachers. The small number of educators who signed up to participate in CIMT eliminated the need for wait list procedures resulting from teacher over enrolment (20).

Class meetings were held Saturdays, from 1:00 PM to 2:30 PM on a high school campus of mentioned school district. Participants provided initial demographic data during week one, (DOB, years of service, gender, ethnicity) including responses to writing prompts clarifying intent for personal participation (Appendix C). Additionally, cohort participants completed both the Self-Compassion Scale (SCS) (Neff, 2003) and the Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (FFMQ) (Baer, Smith, Hopkins, Krietemeyer & Toney, 2006). Prior to CIMT participation and post-CIMT participation, interviews were scheduled to address individual responses to the CIMT intervention (Appendix C). Participants were encouraged to complete weekly meditation homework sheets collected during CIMT (Appendix D). All interviews were conducted on site, and audio recorded for purposes of transcription.

## **Data**

CIMT was a 6-week mindfulness-based intervention protocol (90 min per week) addressing compassion, self-compassion, common humanity, mindfulness, and resilience *exclusively* for educators. The curriculum was interactive and experientially based, providing significant opportunity for self-discovery and reflection (Appendix B). Two questionnaires were used pre-CIMT and post-CIMT intervention: the 39-item Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (FFMQ) (Baer et al., 2006) and the 26-item Self-Compassion Scale (SCS) (Neff, 2003). Along with these instruments, mindfulness homework worksheets were used to frame contextual specific themes of compassion, mindfulness and common humanity emphasized during CIMT training. Extrapolating similar themes of mindfulness and compassion in the pre-intervention written prompt, and post-intervention interview completed the diversity of qualitative data. The pre-intervention writing prompt established demographic data and motivation for taking CIMT; the post intervention interview explored participant responses based on CIMT participation.

### **CIMT 6-Week Mindfulness-based Intervention**

The following outline details the curriculum for *Compassion Informed Mindfulness for Teachers*. Foundational to CIMT was meditation practice. Participants were encouraged to engage in daily sitting practice up to 20 minutes per day. The emphasis of CIMT was the consistency of practice, not length.

*Week 1: Stability and Spaciousness.* Mindful awareness of non-judgmental awareness, meditation, breath awareness, body awareness, relaxation, spaciousness and over-identification. Major theorists: Jon Kabat-Zinn, Ph.D, Paul Goldstein, Sylvia Boorstein, Ph.D., and Alan Wallace, Ph.D.

*Week 2: Cultivating Loving-Kindness.* Loving-kindness is cultivating feelings of good will. It is relevant to all situations. Through the discipline of being still we make a courageous choice to be still (Salzberg, 1995) thus cultivating intention in our mind for the happiness of others and self. What unites our common humanity is an “urge for happiness.” Major theorists: Sharon Salzberg, Pemma Chodron, Thupten Jinpa, Ph. D.

*Week 3: Cultivating Compassion for Another.* Compassion is a response to suffering. It has the capacity to heal and strengthen individual resolve. Compassion for others is rooted in common humanity, and highlights the similarity of others as “just like me.” Major theorist: Thupten Jinpa, Ph.D., Kristin Neff, Ph.D., Chris Germer, Ph.D.

*Week 4: Cultivating Loving-Kindness for Self.* Loving-kindness for self is defined as clear seeing, having an honest appraisal of self. Honesty, kindness, humor and good heartedness prompt awaking in our hearts (Chodron, 2016). Cultivating kindness for ourselves is a genuine wish to be happy and avoid suffering. Major theorists: Sharon Salzberg, Pemma Chodron, Thupten Jinpa, Ph. D., Kristin Neff, Ph. D.

*Week 5: Cultivating Compassion for Self.* Self-Compassion is literally compassion for oneself. Treating oneself kindly provides health and psychological benefits. Self-compassion deals with negative self-criticism, harmful projection toward others and enhances relationships. Major theorist: Thupten Jinpa, Ph.D., Kristin Neff, Ph.D., Chris Germer, Ph.D., Matthieu Ricard.

*Week 6: Compassion Informed Mindfulness in the Classroom.* Compassion and the art of teaching. Teachers learn to recognize stress / trigger points and compassionate responses. Recognizing the strength of loving-kindness to re-frame difficult experiences. Understanding that everyone suffers, and recognizing compassion is always a response to suffering. Major theorist: Patricia Jennings, Ph.D., Pemma Chodron, Tara Brach, Ph.D., Sharon Salzberg.

### **Interview Questions & Writing Prompt**

Qualitative data collection included pre-CIMT writing prompts and post-CIMT interview questions (Appendix C). The purpose of the pre-CIMT prompts was to garner information about cohort motivation for participating in CIMT. The impetus for the post-CIMT interview questions was to assess the effect or difference between pre and post-CIMT participation. Pre-CIMT writing prompts included: “describe your motivation for taking CIMT;” and “how do you view and handle stress in the classroom?” Examples of post-CIMT interview questions were: “how does your understanding of compassion translate into classroom experiences;” “what have you noticed about yourself;” and “do you address emotional triggers in the classroom the same or differently from taking CIMT?” Also included in the case was the inaugural teacher of CIMT. Examples of instructor interview questions were: “what is your appraisal of CIMT thus far;” “what insights do you have to improve CIMT;” and “what were your reasons for teaching CIMT?”

### **Analysis**

The efficacy of CIMT was analyzed through the qualitative lens of teacher voices. Mindfulness-based interventions are suited to this type of analysis. Using the structure of grounded theory (Creswell, 2015), data was analyzed through the application of a systemic design: specific categorical coding and selective coding. Themes for compassion and self-compassion fit easily into a grounded theory approach. Neff’s theory of Self-Compassion, specifically her Self-Compassion Scale (SCS) (Neff, 2003a, 2003b) supports the design of the proposed methodology. Neff describes self-compassion as having three main features “which overlap and mutually interact: Self-kindness versus self-judgement, feelings of common humanity versus isolation, and mindfulness versus over-identification” (Neff, 2011, p. 4).

Themes surrounding compassion and self-compassion position other categories that factor into the overall coding of individual data responses. Systematically, open coding educated initial impressions; axial coding, such as mindfulness and codes reflected by context specific themes such as compassion and awareness also informed data analysis (Creswell, 2015). Supporting axial coding design was the Self-Compassion Scale (SCS) (Neff, 2003a; 2003b). The SCS addresses mindfulness vs. over-identification, common humanity vs. isolation and self-kindness vs. self-criticism. Also supporting axial coding design was the Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (Baer, et al., 2006). The FFMQ explores several features of mindfulness, i.e., observing, describing, acting with awareness, nonjudgmental and non-reactivity. These axial markers informed the grounded theory of mindfulness and compassion within the case of CIMT.

### **Participant Rights**

The following research adhered to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) standards of human subjects outlined by the Human Research Protection Program (HRPP) at the University of New England, Portland, ME (Appendix A). All participants were notified of their right not to participate and the risk of emotional disruption. Although not anticipated, participants could become emotional when engaged or triggered in self-reflection as a result of the MBI. Consent was sought for the use of participant data and electronic data retrieval. Research participants were delivered confidentiality statements clarifying adherence to confidential conversations with cohort participants. Equally, participants were informed of their rights of confidentiality pertaining to the workplace in which the study was conducted.

### **Study Limitations**

Whether a state to be cultivated through meditation practice or an awareness of introspection, compassion was a focus in this research study. Current research related to the

efficacy of mindfulness and compassion suggests positive health trends. However, measuring compassion is a difficult construct to manipulate. Currently, arguments exist if compassion is a state of awareness or a trait exemplified by some and not others (Neff, 2004). Also, an argument exists if compassion (either state or trait) can be cultivated with mindfulness-based interventions.

Compassion theory in the realm of education is in its infancy. This may hinder a fuller understanding of compassion's usefulness in social interactions. The current study may be limited due to a lack of control procedures, the reliance of a structured convenience population (teachers in a specific school district) and the lack of quantifiable measures clarifying the emotional states of participants. However, the voices of teacher's point not to a limitation of this research, but its strength. Themes that resonated within teachers' voices and their experiences with compassion, were difficult to ignore. Critics may point to the obvious: if teachers were taught compassion, of course they would show greater levels of compassion soon after intervention. Accordingly, the Self-Compassion Scale and Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire used in the study show trends difficult to ignore as backdrop descriptors of the entire range of data. The flexibility of design represented in this study, explores the individual intrapersonal and interpersonal dynamics inherent in Thupten Jinpa's theory of "just like me" (2015, p. 153).

## Chapter Four

### Results

Through the lens of participant action research, this study addresses the emotional and mental skills of teachers that promote healthy relationships, interpersonal awareness and emotional balance. Analysis from the protocol *Compassion Informed Mindfulness for Teachers* (CIMT) is presented in the form of a bounded ethnographic instrumental case study (Merriam, 2009). Specifically, instrumental case studies “provide insight into an issue or to redraw a generalization. The case is of secondary interest, it plays a supportive role, and it facilitates our understanding of something else” (Stake, 2005, p. 437). This chapter is a descriptive narrative within the bounded ‘case’ of CIMT. The focus of data (results) will project “insight, discovery and interpretation, rather than hypothesis testing” (Merriam, 2009, p. 42).

First presented is the demographic data describing participants in the bounded case of CIMT; next is the qualitative analysis of participant’s motivation for taking CIMT, their views on handling stress in the classroom and what they identify as emotional triggers to their stress. This is followed by the Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (FFMQ) (Baer, et al., 2006) and the Self-Compassion Scale (SCS) (Neff, 2003a) providing a pre-CIMT and post-CIMT backdrop regarding participation in CIMT. CIMT homework sheets recorded the process of learning how to meditate, barriers to meditation, and observations of meditation. Concluding interviews after week 6 of CIMT identified personal themes surrounding meditation, mindfulness, compassion, loving-kindness, common humanity and personal observations. Aiding to the qualitative data gathering was the insight and interpretation of course delivery by the inaugural CIMT instructor.

## The Case

*Compassion Informed Mindfulness for Teachers* is a mindfulness-based protocol designed to promote the awareness of compassion as a valid pedagogical framework. As a research protocol, CIMT is bounded by the following parameters: a specific 6-week curriculum, with a limited number of participants, all employed in the same school district. The following case is instrumental to the examination of mindfulness, whereby teachers may come to know more about their emotional styles and reaction to stress in the classroom. However, the case is secondary to instruction (Merriam, 2009) and participation in CIMT, but provides support for the analysis of CIMT results.

### Demographics

Nine secondary educators from a suburban Northern California school district individually selected to participate in CIMT. All but one participant continued through the 6-week course. The cohort consisted of 4 males and 5 females. The median age of participants was between 41-45 years, with the range between 20 and 65 years. Additionally, 4 of the 9 participants were under 35 years of age, characterizing the group as modestly young. Ethnically, seven participants reported their ethnicity as White, one as Filipino and one as Japanese. Teaching experience in the cohort ranged from 1 year to 12 years. Nearly all the cohort (7/9) was from a single secondary school site. A range of teaching and support services represented the group: physical education, industrial arts, counseling, chemistry, physics, special education, math, business and nursing. Furthermore, 6 of the 9 original participants reported having either a Pupil Personnel Services credential, an Education Specialist credential, or registered nurse (R.N.). The following table represents years of service and credentials held by case participants.



Table 2. Years of Service &amp; Credential

Years	Credential
12	Secondary Math
1	Registered Nurse
3	Education Specialist: Social Science
8	Education Specialist: Science
3	Education Specialist: SDC
11	Physical Education / Business
5	Education Specialist: RSP
4	Pupil Personal Services
2	Physical Science

### Pre-CIMT Questions

Prior to the commencement of CIMT, participants responded to a free response pre-study questionnaire. Participants addressed the following topics: motivation / reasons for taking CIMT, handling stress in the classroom, and circumstances that trigger emotional responses.

**Motivation.** Direct statements from case participants encompassed the range of motivation data. Three themes emerged from participant responses: mindfulness, understanding emotions and skill-improvement. Learning and understanding mindfulness emerged as the principal reason teachers volunteered to participate in the CIMT protocol, understanding their emotions and skill improvement complete response patterns.

*Mindfulness.* From 17 responses regarding motivation for taking CIMT, eight were as identified mindfulness (47%). Responses included: “learning about mindfulness practices;” “to learn more about mindfulness;” “gain a better understanding of mindfulness;” “improve being in the moment;” “to gain more perspective ... in my own mindfulness;” and “help me step into a compassionate state of mind.” Threaded in participant statements is the hint of mindfulness awareness. Teachers appeared to show insight about what mindfulness may entail and seemed interested in its interpretation and applicability of use.

*Understanding emotions.* Understanding emotions was the next priority for participating in CIMT. Three emotional themes emerged: handling stress, anger and self-care. Responses included, “handling stress from my job;” “how to evaluate myself without getting drawn into the push-pull of not wanting ... to experience what I am” [experiencing]; “to take care of my

Motivation for CIMT		
Learn mindfulness	Understand emotions	Skill improvement

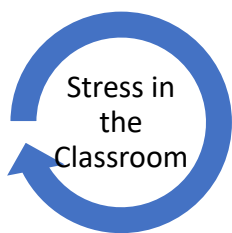
emotional state;” “to lower my stress levels;” “decrease possibility of my

temper arising,” and to “know I did the best I could to foster growth in my students and myself.”

Mindfulness and emotional awareness are complimentary themes. Thus, the projected responses are in keeping with the larger desire to learn mindfulness. This could be a function of understanding emotional states as they relate to general and specific contexts (work life, non-work life).

*Skill improvement.* The last theme to emerge from motivational cues to pursue CIMT was skill improvement. Garnered in this assessment is the notion of improving pedagogical skills that enhance teaching. Teachers reported a desire to broaden their repertoire of skills to assist in the classroom. Responses included: “have more tools for handling difficult situations;” “to be better equipped with tools to become a better teacher / coach;” “to develop my skills to communicate with my students;” “to be more effective and advocate for each student’s needs;” and “the idea of getting more ideas for practices that help me step into a compassionate frame of mind.” Motivation for participating in CIMT appears varied, just as any learning experience tends to be. Three primary themes define the motivation of participating in CIMT: learning mindfulness, understanding emotions and skill improvement.

**Handling stress in the classroom.** Two distinct themes emerged in the data response: awareness that stress exists in the classroom, and personal strategies to handle stress.



- Awareness
- Personal coping strategies

*Awareness.* All CIMT participants reported being aware of stress in relation to their classroom or professional duties.

Teachers awareness of stress is reflected in the following: “I struggle to handle stress from my job;” “the stress

component of my job is formidable;” “I am aware of what it [stress] feels like in my body;”

“stress among my students can be palpable;” and “I felt stressful.” These responses are in

keeping with participant reflections of understanding emotions as motivation for taking CIMT.

*Strategies.* Cohort participants reported a variety of strategies for dealing with stress.

For example: “exercise;” “devotional time in bible and prayer;” “work on meditating;” “remind

myself throughout the day that I am working with young adults who don’t have the tools to

manage their stress;” “when I am stressed, I try to take a breath and remind myself to slow

down;” “when I am frustrated with a student, I avoid them, because I don’t want to say or do

anything that I would regret;” “I make a conscious effort to practice breathing to calm my

center;” “staying curious, breathing ... remembering what it was like to be a teen all help me

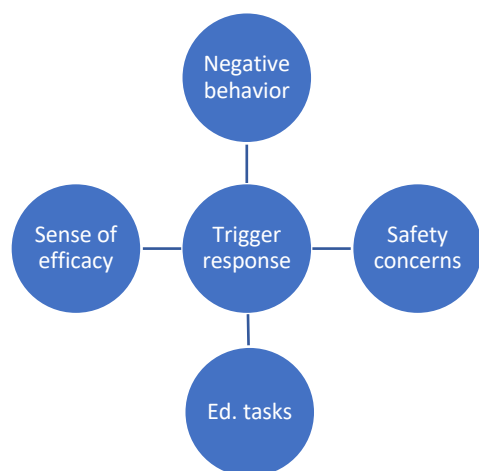
handle being in the classroom before stress can build;” “encourage conversation;” “set

boundaries;” “try to relax, take deep breaths;” and “inject humor and not take myself so

seriously.” These responses reflect strategies teachers use to assuage their levels of stress.

**Circumstances that trigger emotional responses in the classroom.** Case participants reported several features related to circumstances that trigger emotional states in the classroom: negative student behavior, task behavior i.e., grading, lesson planning, etc., safety concerns and a sense of efficacy in the classroom.

*Negative student behavior.* Negative student behavior was the most identified as contributing to teacher stress. For example: “when students do not listen to instructions or break class rules, I get angry or irritated;” “when I’ve given instructions 3-times and then students ask



me about it, when I know they have not been paying attention, I get irritated;” students “are clearly not respecting me;” “when students continue to talk during reading time;” “I get upset when students give up and refuse to try;” “when I’m getting a lot of fooling around;” and “tardy students – walking in late.”

Themes of student mis-behavior resonate in the realm of classroom experiences. Student department is of significant concern with teachers

*Safety concerns.* Concern for student safety was identified as increasing the teacher’s emotional responses. Teachers responded they were triggered “often when safety is involved;” “my big trigger is when another student is being targeted and their safety is in question;” “I don’t like to see someone who doesn’t know how to stick up for themselves;” and “from anyone hurting others.” The theme of protection / safety resonates with the teaching profession. Many adults are keenly aware of social circumstances in which students may be placed in harms’ way by bullying or other negative behaviors. It is in keeping with the tradition of educators to provide a safe and supportive environment for their students.

*Task behavior.* Tasks related to the craft of teaching were also identified as stress inducing. CIMT teachers reported being overwhelmed, “I give too much of myself to my job;” reported multitasking, “the responsibilities we have as teachers, juggling all the things we need to do;” and overburdened, “the stress of countless hours of grading student work.” Even though

these tasks define what teachers are expected to perform, they take up considerable emotional and physical time.

*Sense of efficacy.* A limited theme of efficacy emerged in the pre-CIMT writing prompt. Several teachers revealed their emotional triggers derived from a sense of not performing to expectations. For example, “the thought of me not maximizing potential of myself as a teacher / coach;” and “a feeling of failing the students of coming to terms with the lack of control I can truly have over a given situation or circumstance in the lives of my students.” Inherent in all professional behavior is the sense of performing to one’s capability and the expectations of others, be it peers or supervisors. Anxiety surrounding performance efficacy in the classroom appears present in the descriptions of teachers in the CIMT cohort.

### **Attendance**

A total of nine educators enrolled at the start of CIMT. There was one incidence of attrition to the case, commencing at week two. For the sake of data clarity, total participation was calculated at 48 total sessions for a total of 8 participants attending 6 classes. All but one participant (7 out of 8) attended at least 5 of the 6 classes. All but one class averaged from 75 % to 88 % participation. For the week of February 9, only 4 CIMT participants attended. The likelihood of greater variance seen during this week could be attributed to the school district calendar (3-day weekend, February 11, 2019).

Table 3. CIMT Attendance -- January 26, 2019 thru March 2, 2019

Week	1/26/19	2/02/19	2/09/19	2/16/19	2/23/19	3/02/19	Total
Percent	8/9 (.88)	6/8 (.75)	4/8 (.5)	7/8 (87.5)	7/8 (87.5)	7/8 (87.5)	<b>38/48 (79.87)</b>

### **Self-Compassion Scale**

The Self-Compassion Scale (Neff, 2003) was designed to capture a range of awareness through the lens of self-compassion. Many people fail to recognize the mental and emotional strength associated with treating oneself as kind as they would to another. For many people, recognizing self-compassion is awkward and socially taboo. This could account for the cohort motivation to investigate compassion curriculum. Different from self-esteem theory, in which esteem is gained at the reputation of others (Neff, 2011), self-compassion is not dependent on the appraisal of others, but the honest appraisal of the self, each moment and breath at a time.

CIMT case participants were administered the Self-Compassion Scale (Neff, 2003a) pre and post CIMT intervention. The Self-Compassion Scale (SCS) “is a valid and reliable construct” (Neff, 2016) measuring dimensions of self-compassion through a matrix of three strands: self-kindness vs. self-judgement; common humanity vs. isolation; and mindfulness vs. over-identification. The underlying theory of the SCS is the preponderance of self-criticism, isolation and over-identification as a default-mode style of coping with life trauma and related events. Self-criticism is the opposite of self-kindness (compassion), feeling isolated from others is different from feeling connected to a common humanity, in which “just like me” (Jinpa, 2015, p. 158) everyone experiences, pain, trauma and joy; and mindfulness characterizes the ability to be present with our experiences as they unfold, not over-identifying that one’s problems are solely unique to themselves. Pre- and post-CIMT intervention SCS scores are presented in table 4 below.

Table 4. Self-Compassion Scale Data (SCS)

CIMT Pre-test 1/26/2019 -- CIMT Post-test 3/02/2019

	Pre-CIMT SCS	Post-CIMT SCS	Pre-CIMT SK	Post-CIMT SK	Pre-CIMT SJ	Post-CIMT SJ	Pre-CIMT CH	Post-CIMT CH	Pre-CIMT IS	Post-CIMT IS	Pre-CIMT Mind	Post-CIMT Mind	Pre-CIMT OI	Post-CIMT OI
M	3.33	3.72	3.2	3.8	3.08	2.34	2.75	3.89	3.21	2.96	3.35	4.0	3.17	2.57
1	2.65	4.44	3.0	4.2	3.8	1.6	2.25	4.75	2.75	1.25	2.5	4.25	3.2	2.5
2	3.03	4.22	4.2	5.0	3.0	1.4	1.5	3.25	4.25	3.5	4.25	4.75	2.5	1.25
3	3.75	3.79	3.4	3.8	2.6	2.0	3.25	3.5	2.25	3.25	4.5	4.25	1.75	1.75
4	---	3.76	---	3.2	---	2.6	3.0	3.75	---	1.25	---	3.5	---	2.0
5	3.29	3.4	3.0	3.2	3.0	3.2	4.25	4.0	1.75	2.5	3.0	3.25	3.75	2.75
6	2.8	3.75	3.4	3.8	3.6	2.6	3.5	4.0	3.5	2.75	2.75	4.0	4.0	3.0
7	2.5	2.99	3.0	3.6	2.2	2.4	1.25	2.75	4.75	4.75	3.5	3.0	3.0	2.75
8	2.66	3.49	2.4	3.0	3.4	3.2	3.25	5.0	3.25	2.75	3.0	4.5	4.0	4.0
9	2.96		3.0		3.2		4.0		3.5		3.25		3.75	

SCS = Self-Compassion Scale; SK = Self-Kindness; SJ = Self-Judgement; CH = Common Humanity; IS = Isolation; Mind = Mindfulness; OI = Over Identification, M = Mean (N=7)

SCS subscale scores were derived by calculating the average of subscale responses through a Likert-measurement survey design. Reverse scoring negative subscale response, i.e., self-judgment, isolation and over-identification was used to determine subscale reference points for an overall SCS profile (Neff, 2003). The following are examples of survey questions from each subscale of the SCS: self-kindness – “I try to be loving toward myself when I’m feeling emotional pain;” common humanity – “I try to see my failings as part of the human condition;” mindfulness – “when something upsets me, I try to keep my emotions in balance;” self-judgment – “when times are really difficult, I tend to be tough on myself;” isolation – “When I think about my inadequacies, it tends to make me feel more separate and cut off from the rest of the world;” and, over-identification – “when I’m feeling down, I tend to obsess and fixate on everything that is wrong” (Neff, 2011). Mean subscale scores were determined by averaging pre-CIMT cohort totals (N=7, due to an incomplete data set) and post-CIMT cohort totals (N=8).

All cohort participants showed increases in their overall SCS profile (pre-CIMT mean 3.33, post-CIMT mean 3.72), suggesting that the CIMT curriculum was represented in the

change of scores. However, greater variance was exhibited in the subscales self-judgment (pre-CIMT mean 3.08, post-CIMT mean 2.34), common humanity (pre-CIMT mean 2.75, post-CIMT mean 3.89), and over-identification (pre-CIMT mean 3.17, post-CIMT mean 2.57). Lower scores in the negative strand (self-judgment, over-identification) reflect less self-criticism, and less rumination, whereas increased scores in the positive strands (common humanity) reflect awareness that everyone experiences trauma and joy. Several teachers showed substantial increases from their initial SCS profile in relation to post-CIMT scores (participant 1, 2, 6, 8). Response error accounts for incomplete data for participant number 4 pre-test. Although inconclusive, participant 4 had elevated scores on post-test SCS, suggesting meaningful engagement with the CIMT curriculum. Participant 9 did not complete the course.

#### **Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire**

CIMT case participants were also administered the Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (Baer, et al., 2006) pre and post CIMT intervention. The Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (FFMQ) was derived by the analysis of existing mindfulness questionnaires that reliably measure dimensions of observation, acting with awareness, describing, non-judgmental and non-reactionary phenomena associated with a mindfulness profile (Baer, et al., 2006). Key to understanding mindfulness is the ability of being present and aware of circumstances without judgment or criticism. Just as in the SCS, the FFMQ used reverse scoring of negative items to achieve an overall FFMQ profile. The following are examples of survey questions from each subscale of the FFMQ: observe – “I pay attention to sensations, such as the wind in my hair or sun on my face;” describe – “I’m good at finding words to describe my feelings;” describe (reverse scored) – “It’s hard for me to find the words to describe what I’m thinking;” act with awareness (reverse scored) – “when I do things, my mind wanders off and I’m easily



distracted;” non-judgmental (reverse scored) – “I criticize myself for having irrational or inappropriate emotions;” and, non-reactivity – “I perceive my feelings and emotions without having to react to them.” Mean subscale scores were determined by averaging cohort totals (N=8) pre-CIMT and post-CIMT.

All CIMT cohort participants showed increases in their overall FFMQ mindfulness profile (pre-CIMT mean 3.25, post-CIMT mean 3.79). These data suggest the CIMT curriculum was represented in the change of scores. Interestingly, the subscale of non-reactivity showed some of the largest percentage increases (.62) on the FFMQ (pre-CIMT mean 2.85, post-CIMT mean 3.47) even though some teachers showed decreased scores from pre-CIMT administration. Similarly, the subscale of non-judgement showed considerable variance between pre and post-test (.62) on the FFMQ (pre-CIMT mean 3.57, post-CIMT mean 4.06). Additionally, participants demonstrated modest FFMQ variance in pre to post CIMT on the subscale observation (.49) on the FFMQ (pre-CIMT mean 3.63, post-CIMT mean 4.27). Participant 9 did not complete the course. Table 5 below summarizes pre and post-CIMT FFMQ response sets.

Table 5. Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire Data (FFMQ)

CIMT Pre-test 1/26/2019 -- CIMT Post-test 3/02/2019

	Pre-CIMT FFMQ	Post-CIMT FFMQ	Pre-CIMT OBS	Post-CIMT OBS	Pre-CIMT DE	Post-CIMT DE	Pre-CIMT AAW	Post-CIMT AAW	Pre-CIMT NJ	Post-CIMT NJ	Pre-CIMT NR	Post-CIMT NR
M	3.25	3.79	3.63	4.27	3.23	3.79	2.96	3.34	3.57	4.06	2.85	3.47
1	3.18	4.0	3.87	4.37	2.62	3.5	2.75	3.25	4.12	4.87	2.57	4.0
2	3.14	4.21	3.0	4.12	4.12	5.0	2.12	3.5	3.75	4.87	2.71	3.57
3	4.23	4.54	4.12	4.25	4.75	5.0	4.75	5.0	4.0	4.26	3.57	3.85
4	3.35	3.77	3.87	4.87	3.25	3.62	3.12	3.5	3.25	4.0	3.28	2.85
5	3.50	3.54	4.37	4.5	3.62	3.5	2.87	2.5	3.5	3.5	3.14	3.71
6	2.75	3.25	3.12	3.87	2.5	3.12	2.62	2.75	3.12	3.5	2.4	3.0
7	2.87	3.71	2.87	3.62	2.87	3.12	3.62	3.75	3.12	4.37	1.85	3.71
8	2.98	3.37	3.87	4.62	2.12	3.5	1.87	2.5	3.75	3.12	3.28	3.14
9	3.33		3.87		3.0		3.62		2.87		3.28	

FFMQ = Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire; OBS = Observe; DE = Describe; AAW = Act with Awareness; NJ = Non-Judgmental; NR = Non-Reactionary; M=Mean (N=8)

These descriptive data suggest, though not definitive, that CIMT cohort participants perceived a difference in their coping strategies. Becoming more mindful, self-aware and less self-critical reflect a shift in emotional response patterns not only depicted in classroom interactions but daily experiences included. Not everyone in the group advanced at the same rate, but everyone showed growth in their overall self-compassion and overall mindful awareness.

### **CIMT Meditation Worksheet**

CIMT case participants were encouraged to complete weekly homework meditation sheets (Cusick, 2016; Wallace, 2018) due the following class meetings. The homework assignments captured the growth and concerns of case participants (Appendix D). A number of themes emerged from selected categories defining types of meditation, challenges and barriers to mediation, supports to meditation and comments and observations of meditation. CIMT participants actively engaged in the homework activity. Completion rate was 100 % (8 participants through 5 weeks of participation; week six concluded the study). Even though all participants submitted HW sheets, not all were completed the same way. Some sheets were longer narratives, others bullet point comments and observations. The fact that all participants submitted HW sheets, even weeks missed due to absence, highlights the motivation of CIMT participants. Without economic incentive (purchase of course) participants were motivated to learn and participate in the course curriculum as evidenced by homework activity.

**Types of Meditation.** Case participants were asked to share the type of meditation they undertook each week (5) of CIMT. The overwhelming majority of responses was either “sitting” meditation or “breath awareness” meditation. This is in keeping with the specific breathing

techniques taught during CIMT and the quality of vipassana or insight meditation (Brach, 2003; Goldstein, 1993; Jinpa, 2015) underlying CIMT curriculum.

**Challenges / Barriers to Meditation.** CIMT participants reported several themes related to perceived barriers to meditation practice. These were stress and worry, making time and creating a routine. Fatigue and physical strain, outside environmental influences and the distractions of a pet complete data response.

*Stress & Worry.* The largest number of responses describing challenges and barriers to meditation was identified through the theme of stress and worry. Captured in 5 weeks of HW participation, 57 % of CIMT responses (20/35) related to themes of stress and worry. Responses related to stress and worry populated every week, but with fewer stress and worry responses appearing in week 5. Examples include: “late at night, lots on my head;” “my worries made it harder to do what I needed to do;” “thinking about prep;” “thinking of \_\_\_\_\_, big argument last week;” “anxious about being observed;” “kept thinking about my to-do list;” “lots of thoughts running in my head;” “difficult time slowing down mind;” “after break for a few days, I was avoiding it;” “felt like a chore today;” and “challenging to keep my mind from wandering.”

*Making Time / Routine.* The next frequent response related to challenges and barriers to meditation practice was the theme of making meditation a routine. Making time for the practice emerges during week 2 and populates the following weeks till the end of the study. Responses included: “making time;” “putting it into a routine;” “just making this a routine;” and “pushing myself to take the time.”

Other challenges reported were distracting pets, physical fatigue, comfort issues and outside environmental influences. For example: “couldn’t get myself off the phone;” “long day, exhausted, lots of thoughts;” “had to fight the urge to sleep;” “my feet felt cold, next time have a

blanket;” “my body felt tired;” “dog kept bothering me;” ‘dogs, distraction;” and “trying to stay awake.”

**Supports(s) to Meditation.** Cohort respondents reported numerous supports to their

Quiet & Alone

Practice with others

Positive Emotions

meditation practice. These supports ranged from quiet / alone time, positive emotions,

sharing with other people, developing a routine, and specific compassion practices.

*Quiet / Alone.* Finding quiet and alone time to meditate was identified by CIMT participants as supporting their practice. Responses included: “in class, no other people;” “at home in bed, quiet, dark, comfortable;” “quiet house;” “evening, on my couch, my cat is asleep;” “quiet, alone; earlier in day is better;” “quiet house;” and “hot bath in morning before work.” These data responses indicate the variety of what alone and quiet time mean to different individuals.

*Practice with others.* Having someone to sit with during meditation, discussing about meditation or receiving a reminder from a colleague or friend to meditate, was identified next as contributing support to meditation practice. For example: “I like talking to my co-workers about it;” “a good reminder from \_\_\_\_;” “got a reminder from partner;” “sharing with \_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_ about experience,” and “with \_\_\_\_.” The paradox of meditation is the solitary nature of exploring awareness, while sharing with others personal growth experiences. Substantial to data gathering was the proximity of the principal investigator (PI) and the participants in CIMT. During mid-course, one participant shared with the PI an experience from meditating and the newfound knowledge gained from the insight. Thus, it is in keeping with ‘common humanity’ that CIMT participants would actively want to share their meditation and experiences with others.

*Positive Emotions.* The feeling of positive emotion as a result of meditation practice appeared to support CIMT participants. This could be a reflection (mirror) of the preceding data set (other people). Responses included: “good session;” “It’s been a good day, good mood” “focused on myself;” “space I created to still my brain;” and “positive anticipation of relaxation.” Positive emotions are central to long standing motivation strategies (McGonigal, 2012). CIMT participants displayed these characteristics during course delivery.

Establishing a routine, specific meditation practices and miscellaneous supportive structures accounted for the remainder of responses supporting meditation practice. For example: “same place and time as day before;” “starting to become more routine;” “sent loving-kindness to each 6<sup>th</sup> period student, one at a time;” “mantra prayer;” and “feel bullet proof when thinking of loved ones \_\_\_\_.” Miscellaneous structure reported was “reading *A Fearless Heart*,” “meditation app;” and “used blanket and yoga block.”

Data corroborates cohort participants were motivated to learn meditation skills. Voices of the cohort indicated they sought and identified varying strategies to support their emerging meditation practice. Not surprisingly, seeking quiet and alone time was a substantial theme of the group. Incorporating positive emotions as supportive of meditative practice also contributed as support. Sitting meditation practice with others, meditation apps and reading compassion literature encompassed the range of meditation support detailed by the CIMT cohort.

**Comments & Observation of Meditation.** Participants recorded their observations and comments related to meditation practice as homework throughout CIMT. A variety of themes emerged. They were distributed between stress, focus difficulty, worry / self-criticism, creating routine, issues of practice, relaxation, and stability / spaciousness. Comments and observations recorded in the HW sheets dominated the entire responses of the CIMT homework activity.

*Focus Difficulty.* Cohort participants reported difficulty of focusing during meditation. This was more prominent at the start of the 6-week curriculum, and less evident by the end of the class. There was no reporting of focusing issues during week 5, suggesting, this was not as



pressing a concern during the later stages of the CIMT curriculum. For example: “able to count breaths successful up to \_\_\_\_ before my mind got away;” “hard to stay focused, kept reminding myself to pay attention;” “definitely not the easiest meditation;” challenging to learn to keep mind from wandering;” “didn’t have the same resetting effect

when I did it consistently;” and “my brain was wandering.” The preceding statements reflect the process of learning how to meditate. Participants were acknowledging the inherent paradox of becoming aware of their own minds. The fact the cohort was able to describe the tension of focus, re-direct, focus and re-direct, indicates an awareness of meditation practice.

*Stability of Mind.* CIMT participants reported greater stability of mind and spaciousness to accept difficulty. The opposite seems apparent with the cohort experiencing focusing difficulty, whereas the awareness of stability emerges as early as week 2. It seems cohort participants were aware of their own personal transformation. For instance: “felt calm to start the day, mind relaxed;” “yesterday I realized I valued my day; each day is a miracle;” “was able to go to bed with a clear head;” “I love that I am seeking out this feeling I am having of space;” “experience of connecting back to the breath, I noticed how happy I felt, my mouth was smiling my heart felt the smile;” “I really focused on breath more than compassion; I am far more focused than usual;” “before, [meditation] I struggled to focus and bring my mind back to

breathing;” “really focused on good thoughts and intentions going into the week;” “just making space, not solving problems;” and “spaciousness is easier for me to grasp.” The preceding information suggests the CIMT cohort was actively learning meditation skills. The emerging awareness of their emotional state and well-being was reflected in these statements.

*Relaxation.* Participants reported feelings of relaxation as a result of learning how to meditate and participating in CIMT. Relaxation emerged as a distinct theme, but one could reasonably interpret the process of connecting to the breath as inherently relaxing, and contributed to an over-arching theme. Responses ranged from “felt calm to start the day, mind relaxed;” “helped me relax and bring down my stress level;” “It’s very helpful to creating a calm reset and bring in an overall reduction in anxious feelings on a daily basis;” “I recognized a sense of calmness;” and “after meditating, great night sleep, relaxed, had a great day, really relaxed all day.” Even though the purpose of meditation is not necessarily gathering a feeling of relaxation, this is a genuine byproduct of slowing down the breath, observing the mind and letting go of internal dialogue.

*Practice.* Homework data suggests there was noticeable growth in participants meditation practice. Cohort participants recorded their personal experiences of loving-kindness, compassion and self-compassion meditation during the CIMT protocol. It is not surprising to observe these data points emerge in the later weeks of the curriculum. Only one strand of meditation practice data was retrieved during the first two weeks, “I love singling out a loved one ...” By week 3 ‘Cultivating Compassion for Another,’ thru and continuing to week 5, ‘Cultivating Compassion for Self,’ compassion, self-compassion and loving-kindness responses populated the HW sheets. For instance: “this breathing helps; warm sensation around my heart with compassionate image;” “wish kindness to my paraprofessionals;” “A lot of practice of compassion throughout the day;”

“thinking a lot about reactive kindness;” “I am more gentle with my thoughts of self;” “loving kindness to self;” and “I find recently my self-criticism as a teacher has decreased.” Cohort participants seemed actively engaged in the curriculum. These data points reflect the depth of learning by participating teachers.

*Creating Routine.* Creating a routine for meditation practice emerged as one of the themes of the cohort. This was reflected by the following statements: “looking for habit to make it a natural part of my life;” “how to make a habit for morning practice each day;” “when I am home, I can handle my routine;” “I am feeling myself craving time [for meditation];” and “overall, best week so far.” A benchmark of mediation practice is the consistency of effort. The observations and comments by cohort participants reflects this effort.

*Worry / Criticism.* Worry and self-criticism were evident in the patterns of cohort responses. As evidenced in the data set, barriers to meditation and self-criticism was further captured by the following statements: “not sure I’m doing this right, I think I’m blending loving-kindness and breath awareness;” “confusion around what I’m doing and whether it’s right;” “loving kindness is less familiar, need to work on a mantra.”

Interestingly, themes of stress and fatigue were difficult to identify in the observation strand of weekly HW sheets. It’s possible that daily emotions and stress were more responsive through the reporting strand of barriers to meditation, rather than expressed through general comments. However, these data strands emerged: “I am stressed and couldn’t handle 10 minutes of sitting still;” “gas went out at my house, no hot water, heat, fireplace; cold house ... feeling bad about it, can’t stop identifying with it;” and “I fell asleep.”



## Post CIMT Interview Questions

Individual interviews were held with each cohort member upon completion of CIMT. Participants were asked questions related to information from noticing differences about oneself, developing a meditation practice, understanding the differences between self-kindness and self-judgment, the role of compassion in the classroom, and interpreting the concept of shared common humanity. Additionally, participants were asked to assess one's mindfulness, any differences in their experience to emotional triggers in the classroom, and any clarifying moments which occurred as a result of taking CIMT. Concluding comments center on the efficacy of pairing into partners meant to encourage mindfulness practice.

**Noticing Self.** Cohort participants were asked what (if anything) they have noticed about

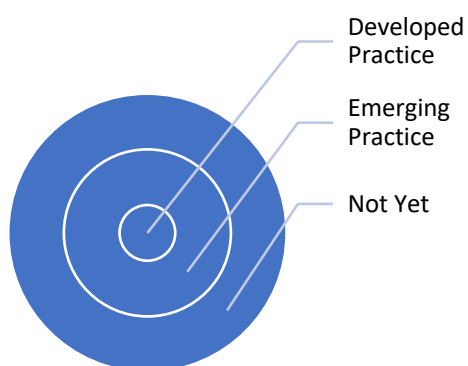


themselves after taking CIMT. Distinct themes emerged: more awareness, meditation is helpful, greater focus, developing a routine and a sense of calm.

*Awareness.* CIMT participants reported a sense of greater awareness as a result of taking CIMT. This was not unexpected. The premise of CIMT and meditation in general is an openness to experiencing our daily life as it unfolds. Becoming more aware was the overriding theme to emerge from this question strand. For example: “It’s easier to offer myself kindness, it’s much more difficult to not be so judgmental;” “I have a long way to go from not judging myself, because I do it daily, hourly;” “It’s important to be kind and it’s important not to judge yourself;” “making space in my head;” I love the analogy of making space;” “that I shouldn’t go through with this self-destructive mind-set;” and “It’s really neat, how just recording it [HW activity] lets it go a little bit [worry].” These data appear to reflect the growth of self-awareness of CIMT participants.

*Helpful.* The next theme to emerge from the interview question related to noticing, was helpfulness. Participants reported learning meditation skills was helpful to their daily functioning. Responses included: “It’s kind of like exercising . . . it’s helpful throughout your daily life routine;” “I think it has been helpful for me;” “It’s changed my tune in terms of how I’m approaching my relationships and my friends;” “I think it has made me a happier person;” “When I do meditation before I go to sleep, I get better sleep;” and “I’ve learned tools and techniques to help.”

*Focus, Routine & Calm.* Although similar to the concepts of awareness and helpfulness, focus, routine and calm emerged as distinct themes in the data. Focus responses included: “I find myself coming back to that balance point quicker;” “I just take those minutes to myself and really focus on my breath;” and “putting the time in and just being focused and calm the mind.” Routine was characterized by the following: “I think self-compassion has really settled into a more habitual place;” and “It’s [meditation] just kind of a part of my life in a way that never really was before.” And finally, a sense of calm could be detected by the response: “I feel like I’m less reactive. I feel as if when situations arise there is just less reactivity and more breathing.” Even though these data sets are relatively small, the voices of CIMT participants revealed a personal meaningful experience.



**Meditation Practice.** CIMT participants expressed varying degrees of meditation practice. Some noted an existing meditation practice, while others indicated a routine was elusive. Most responses indicated the cohort was motivated to meditate throughout CIMT. Also evident in the data was the cohort desire to continue

meditating by establishing a routine. In contrast some responses suggested a meditation practice had not yet developed.

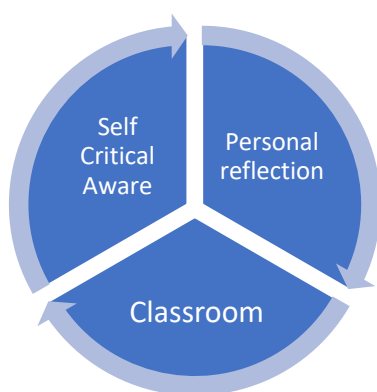
*Developed practice.* These minimal data sets indicate the possibility CIMT may have influenced meditation behavior. Two participants reported an existing practice, “I already had a meditation practice, but now it’s more consistent.” Additionally: “my meditation is already 2 years old, but this is my first official class;” and “every night I meditate, it’s usually about 20 minutes.”

*Emerging Practice.* CIMT participants indicated they were establishing an emerging practice to meditate. Central to these data points was the relationship between time, place and consistency. For example: “I’m trying to work those [meditation] routines and make that a part of what I do;” “by nature, I am not a consistent routine person, so having the class has been very eye-opening, about how hard it is for me to establish a routine;” “establishing finding that time;” “when I did it [meditate] how easily it was for me to get into it, and just let it go;” “the idea that practice doesn’t have to be static ... to sit in a spot or lay in a spot, I’m always looking for that;” “I’m trying to regulate myself, which is kind of nice,” and “it’s still inconsistent with the length of time, but the frequency is consistent, and that is a good thing.” These responses are consistent with emerging meditation practice.

*Motivation & Not Yet.* Previous responses surrounding meditation practice foreshadow the willingness and motivation to learn how to meditate. Still, specific theme of motivation to continue and learn pervades the entire range of data sets. Not all participants established a routine, but the motivation to continue meditation was expressed. For instance: “I don’t think the mindfulness practice was making a big enough change in my daily routine, to make it a part of my everyday practice.” Furthermore: “I’m really glad it’s a skill I have. I know how to do it

which makes me feel it's something in my toolbox.” These statements should not be interpreted as opposite dimensions of the same experience, but solely the reflection of one's experience.

**Self-Kindness vs. Self-Judgment.** The intent of this question was to measure the



prevalence of self-criticism as a construct in the lives of teachers. Since the underlying framework of CIMT was compassion and self-compassion, what were cohort responses? Several themes emerged in their replies: the persistence of self-critical (negative) awareness; personal awareness suggesting self-kindness is important; and

classroom observations of modeling.

*Self-Critical Awareness.* An interesting element in the data sets was the persistence of self-criticism, juxtaposed to the overall cohort of CIMT. It was possible greater awareness of self-compassion translated into greater awareness of self-judgment. Even though a theme of self-criticism is noticeable, it does not have the tinge of hostility or negativity of an over-reactive mind. For example: “a self-critical proving of self [mindset] builds anxiety and it just makes my job hell ... whereas, the self-compassion mindset builds a platform or foundation of walking in peaceful calm.” Additional reply's echo the same: “I think it is very easy to be judgmental of yourself as a teacher and you don't spend much time being kind [to yourself] except when you get the time off;” “when it comes to self-kindness ... is probably my area of weakness, to be honest;” “it's important not to judge yourself, which is very difficult, probably one of the most difficult things one can undertake;” and “I think it is easier to offer myself self-kindness, I think it's more difficult to not be so judgmental.”

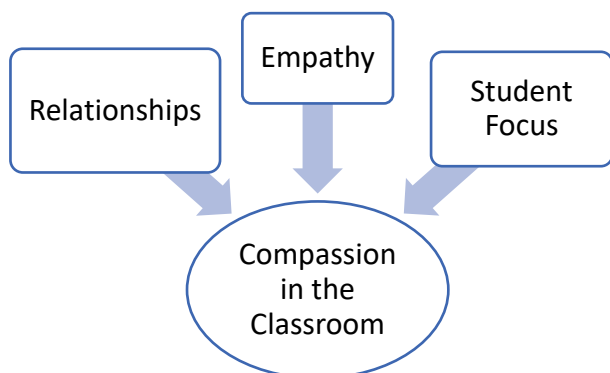
*Personal Awareness.* CIMT cohort participants reported being more aware of self-kindness and self-compassion. It should be noted that levels of personal awareness may or may not be the result of CIMT participation. Some responses were spiritually oriented, i.e. “underlining biblical principles that I totally embrace as foundational to my life.” However, most centered on a general awareness of the importance of a less-critical mind. For instance: “[when] I’m operating from peace of mind, my emotional tank is full, I’m not frantic or anxious;” “my thoughts are deeper and more fruitful;” “even though I might be speed moving ... become more reflective and can seem to get more done;” “I don’t see it in the moment that I’m doing self-compassion ... it’s been sort of settling in, so that I have more space for [self-compassion];” “the awareness that kindness starts inside;” “It has helped me recognize when I’m being-self-judgmental and change and be gentle with myself;” and “I’ve learned tools and techniques to help not to be so judgmental on myself, I think it is beneficial.”

*Classroom Model.* The last theme to emerge from this question strand was the importance of modeling self-compassion in the classroom. Noting the importance of self-compassion in their personal lives, it follows that teachers would wish to share this insight with their students. CIMT participants expressed the following: “this is something that needs to be taught in the children;” “In the classroom specifically, it [self-kindness] helps me be a better teacher, because when my kids know I messed up, I can be kind to myself and show myself forgiveness and love, that’s such a good model for them to see;” and “I feel as teachers we’re models for that [self-kindness] and it can definitely be something that comes into the classroom and curriculum.”

**Compassion in the Classroom.** Distinct themes emerged when CIMT participants were asked to translate their understanding of compassion in the classroom. Identified was a general

focus on students, a greater sense of empathy, and building teacher relationships with students.

These data are consistent with a general theme of prosocial behaviors, in which greater



connection, empathy and positive relationships support a framework of compassion.

*Student Focus.* Not surprisingly, a general focus on understanding compassion in classroom experiences

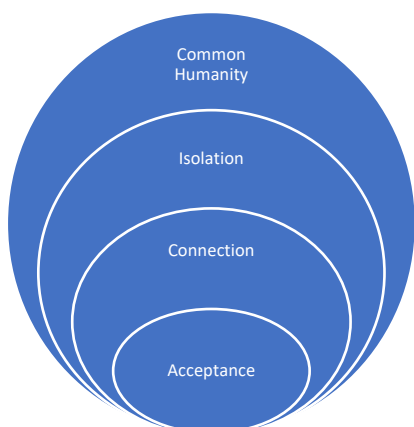
involves student interactions. Cohort participants expressed the following: “having an understanding of compassion is helpful to meet them [students] where they are, we can’t teach them until we understand where they are at in their lives;” “bringing compassion into the classroom ... it’s not about teaching reading, writing or arithmetic, it’s about helping them be okay with who they are, because if they are not okay, they can’t learn;” “modeling compassion and showing others you know that acceptance is okay; everyone’s different. We all walk different paths but we’re all on the same kind of journey;” and, “you really have to have classroom compassion for recognizing that your students are busy and they have many other things that they are doing.”

*Empathy.* CIMT participants reported a sense of empathy that underlay their understanding of compassion in the classroom. This should not be a surprising feature of the data, but highlights the role empathy plays in social contexts. Classrooms by nature are socially dynamic and it takes a keen awareness of the interactions of many to create empathic spaces to learn. The following are replies from cohort participants and their understanding of compassion: “I think loving the self translates automatically into having greater space to love others;” “Not

only being kind to myself, but putting myself in another person’s shoes having that empathy, having that understanding;” “I think it goes right along with empathy;” and, “understanding the empathy and compassion towards the individual you are interacting with.”

*Relationships.* The theme of teacher relationship building with their students filled out the response sets of participants. Teacher responses included: “compassion comes into my teaching for me with my relationship building with students;” “I make an effort to check in individually with each student, see how they are doing, establish rapport and open lines of communication;” and, “I think the edge of establishing a relationship is important and if you don’t take the time to do that, you’re going to struggle as a teacher.”

**Shared Common Humanity vs. Isolation.** A foundational feature of self-compassion is



the understanding everyone suffers. Often this is characterized by the mis-perception that one’s troubles are solely unique to their own experience, thus isolating from an awareness that “just like me” (Jinpa, 2015) we all experience trauma and happiness. Three themes emerged from cohort responses: acceptance, isolation and connection.

*Acceptance.* Interview data indicate a robust response to shared common humanity vs isolation. A general theme of acceptance emerged from the cohort in their experiences as a teacher. For example: “we all need the same things, we need acceptance, we need validation, we need to be heard;” “during the training I noticed that [shared common humanity] was definitely helpful;” “I think it is really powerful for students to realize that as adults we hurt and cry and sometimes you know, we break and need band-aids ... hopefully we’re able to model

how to get through this and not be so reactive;” “common humanity is that we’re all in it, we’re all involved;” and, “shared humanity, that’s not a new concept for me. I think I’ve always treated people with fairness and respect.”

*Isolation.* As noted earlier within the context of self-kindness vs self-judgment, isolation inherently describes the opposite of common humanity. Thus, these data may reflect a growing awareness of the role isolation plays in understanding common human experiences. However, teaching by nature, is an isolating experience for many educators. Cohort responses included: “when you have natural isolation, you can develop notions of what everybody else is going through;” “teaching can be really isolating, you get stuck in your room, you get stuck in your thoughts ... you get stuck with your kids;” “help students realize that they’re not the only person sitting here who doesn’t understand;” and, “I think it’s easy to feel isolated as a teacher ... our own little island, it’s easy to feel isolated.”

*Connection.* A limited theme of connection emerged within the data set. This should be expected as the phenomena of shared humanity is central to connection. Cohort participants responded as the following: “nobody wants to feel pain, but everybody is the same so we all do feel pain;” “shared common humanity enhances our emotional resilience even if the situation doesn’t improve, just knowing you’re in it with other people is huge;” and, “one of the most powerful tools we have as teachers is our ability to story-tell, and when we story-tell, we connect with our common humanity.”

**Mindfulness vs. Feelings of Over-Identification.** A hallmark principle of mindfulness is awareness of awareness (A. Wallace, personal communication, October, 2018). A central tenant of mindfulness practice is the ability to not over-identify with any specific issue or



problem. Cohort participants in CIMT reported increased awareness of their mindfulness. Awareness, observation and over-identification emerge as themes in this data strand.

*Awareness.* CIMT participants reported being aware of their emerging awareness skills. Awareness of awareness (A. Wallace, 2018) also implies being un-aware. Cohort responses included: “mindfulness is like awareness;” “awareness of awareness ... is very helpful; when experiencing anxiety or depressive emotions, to be able to recognize it in a non-judgmental way;” “I’m really working to grow ... really encouraged with this kind of training;” “through the entire class, if I learn anything, that [mindful vs mindless] was so profound;” “Now I’m becoming far more reflective about being aware;” and, “the ability to just recognize in a moment how I’m feeling, like I’ve become far more aware of what’s going on, than I think I was before.”

*Observation & Over-Identification.* Training in mindfulness encourages observation. However, a critical and judgmental mind encourages over-identification that one’s problems will never cease. Cohort responses indicated this dynamic in the following: “to observe and let go without judgment brings more of a sense of peace and it’s easier to come back to equilibrium;” “it’s just a thought – its ok to let it go, and when you let it go, there’s that space we created;” “mindfulness helps me connect with myself;” “I tend to get attached to and identify with a problem, so that problem is me, instead of, I’m experiencing a problem;” and, “it’s probably one of the more helpful realizations I have come to by taking this class; when you get into a rhythm of constantly identifying with problems, that affects everything from your profession to your relationships.”

**Emotional Responses in the Classroom.** CIMT cohort participants were asked if they responded to emotional triggers in the classroom the same or differently since taking CIMT. A theme of responding differently emerged in the data in which participants reported being

mindful, volitional, and responsive to their emotional triggers. Teachers also reported gaining personal insight as a result of taking CIMT.

*Different.* A robust theme of responding differently emerges from the data interviews. Teachers in this cohort seem to suggest they deal with classroom phenomena differently as a result of taking CIMT. Consider the following examples: “I would definitely say differently. I can’t explain how profound I think this course has been for me as a teacher. As a new teacher, three years and at 50, so late ... and not having that much experience, I feel like I just got the best golden tool for my toolbox;” “I feel because of this class, I’ve become far slower in my reaction and far more reflective. Yea, I do feel it’s helped me and made me far more in control of what happens with me and my relationships with my kids.” And finally, “I take them differently ... before I would lose my temper ... a kid would be demonstrative or negative, not often but it would happen. I haven’t had a single issue of that since CIMT, but it hasn’t been a long time, so I’d like to look at this over a year.” The voices of these teachers suggests they responded to classroom phenomena differently. This may or may not be attributed to CIMT.

Some cohort responses reflected a neutral tone to addressing emotional triggers in the classroom. They included: “made me more aware that I think about it a lot more;” and, “I do feel like I was able to be a little more aware of them [emotional triggers] and address them a little bit;” Finally, “you have to understand that they [students] have stuff going on and they wear more than their backpacks;” and, “probably definitely, ...;” These data reflect individual impressions and should not be taken as trends either positive or negative in relation to responding to emotional classroom trigger points.

**Clarifying Moments.** The purpose of inquiring about what participants didn’t expect to occur as a result of taking CIMT, was to determine which features of CIMT resonated with the

group. At the very least, these responses capture the enthusiasm the cohort exhibited throughout the entire 6-weeks of instructional delivery. Table 6 below provides a list of participant responses.

Table 6. Clarifying Moments Attributed to Taking CIMT

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not being carried away by all the stuff in your head</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staying focused in the current moment whatever you're doing; not letting your mind run away with you</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The idea of re-framing experiences; noticing these moments don't have the same resonance, thus a shift in your thinking, re-framing it</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When I started to say something, I did not hesitate</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creating space of letting go of thoughts ... coming back to the breath</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mindful listening. I recognize that I am a giant interrupter, I have so much to say and want to say it badly ... I'm going to really work on that</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It's made me more understanding and aware of what's going on in the people around me; I feel more connected and I think they visibly notice that there is a difference in me</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Just take it slow and you know, take a break in the middle of class and give them that space and that mindfulness kind of setting</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The whole idea of non-identification with a stressor or with a problem or with moments of non-achievement; although it's still a constant struggle, something that I'm going to probably deal with for the rest of my life.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I never had the thought that you are not the problem, the problem is something you experienced; that philosophy has made a tremendous impact on me ... I'm grateful for that, and something I'm going to try to work on</li> </ul>

CIMT participants were encouraged to pair into 'buddies' to assist their mindfulness practice. Respondents had mixed reactions. Typical was the following: "I already had a friendship with him, it went well, we did hold each other accountable occasionally, but it wasn't an everyday thing, so I can't tell if there was a benefit or not." However, several responses were less enthusiastic: "my person basically dropped out ...;" "I didn't have a connection with my partner;" and, "did not work too well for us ... texting wasn't their preferred method." These data suggest mixed results regarding use of a buddy (or partner) to assist in one's mindfulness practice.

## CIMT Instructor Interviews

Unique to the data gathering of this study was the perspective and voice of the inaugural CIMT instructor. These interviews complete a fuller picture of the emerging case by incorporating the views, insights and concerns of its teacher, alongside the views of the cohort. In some ways, data from the teacher interviews mirror themes of the cohort: establishing a routine, positive connections and increased awareness.

*Midpoint.* The following questions midpoint of CIMT were asked of the instructor: what was your appraisal of the course thus far [third week]; how do you feel about your participation; what successes have you identified in the class; what concerns do you have with the course curriculum, and what insights do you have to improve CIMT?

Table 7. Midpoint CIMT Teacher Interview (week 3) Appraisal of Course

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students who are attending are getting a lot of benefit</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 90 minutes is too short a time</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Makes me think about the challenges of designing a course like this to make it accessible for teachers who are very busy</li> </ul>
<p>Participation as Teacher</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I enjoy teaching the class and I am happy with the class</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I planned to introduce and teach more material each week than I have time to do, and had to adjust</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I would like to include more opportunities for the participants to engage with each other</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I feel that I have a very good grasp on the psychological principles that underwrite the transformation of these practices and I can provide them with a clear and accessible understanding of the concepts and mechanics of the transformation that they could experience.</li> </ul>
<p>Success Identified</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The stories of the students [cohort] have shared with regard to practicing mindful self-awareness and trying to cultivate a more compassionate attitude</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Just wonderful stories of students [cohort] who have personally experienced what I am trying to teach, beautifully and poignantly</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The students [cohort] are really interested in the material and they ask questions</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I feel like I am helping them with their mindfulness practice</li> </ul>

### Concerns & Insights for Improvement

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More opportunities for didactic interactions and mindfulness exercises</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One of the challenges of the course is getting teachers to take the class and to show up</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gaining support from the administration to permit teaching this material during the school day ... maybe re-designing the material to fit 50-minute blocks, to get a class of 20 teachers to show up for maybe 10 weeks instead of 6</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Compare and contrast those [mindfulness] teachers with others that take yoga or doing something else for 50-minutes</li> </ul>

*Final.* A final interview was held with the inaugural teacher of CIMT. Points of emphasis included reasons for teaching CIMT, final impressions, areas of improvement, concerns and final thoughts not touched upon previous.

Table 8. Post-CIMT Teacher Interview (reflections)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To help teachers who are in the class to become more mindful and more compassionate</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I love to teach compassion and mindfulness and it was an opportunity for me to develop further my skills teaching the cultivation of compassion</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I was in a unique position to be able to deliver the curriculum and teach the research, so I know my interest in supporting your project</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I've been mentoring you, Michael, for a while now, and I wanted to make sure you were able to do the research</li> </ul>

Final impressions of CIMT by the course instructor were similar to the comments made at midpoint of the study. Most notably to emerge was a theme of positive connection. For example: “during the 90 minutes we were all together, there in the library, there were authentic moments of connection and growth, of empathy;” “I witnessed the students responding to what it’s like when they do connect empathically;” and, “the weather was really bad, but you know the class did meet.” As per the mid-point interview, length of time and duration of class were areas of concern. For example: “probably 6 weeks isn’t long enough ... if you had 60-minute sessions, but more of them, so we could break things down ... and if we had 30 more minutes.”

Concluding thoughts attributed to the inaugural teacher were: “you need to get the administration to agree to it ... you need to have a funding structure to do it;” “I thought it [CIMT] was a

positive, supportive and healthy environment for the teachers taking part in the course;” and, “I think we really have to find a way that we can teach all the teachers and do it in a way that they’ll show up and support each other; I think you would see a remarkable transformation in \_\_\_\_\_ High School.”

### **Summary**

The purpose of this study was to explore the efficacy of mindfulness in the professional lives of educators. The range of data collected specifically addressed themes related to the emotional and mental skills of teachers that promote healthy relationships, interpersonal awareness and emotional balance. Central to data gathering was the over-arching question of how do teachers make meaning of their classroom experiences through the paradigm of mindfulness? The methodological triangulation of written responses, self-administered questionnaires’ and oral interviews, suggests mindfulness emerged as a pedagogical and personal coping strategy in the lives of CIMT educators. Numerous positive examples of compassion, self-compassion and mindfulness populate the descriptions of teacher experiences as a result of CIMT participation. Post-test measures of mindfulness (FFMQ) and self-compassion (SCS) showed increases in each measure for each participant in the cohort. Oral interviews clarify the depth and breadth of participant interaction with the learning concepts of CIMT: compassion, common humanity and mindfulness.

Cohort motivation for taking CIMT was strong. Participants voluntarily attended a 90-minute class on Saturday for 6-weeks. Participation was good at 79.87%. Educators of the CIMT cohort were motivated to learn mindfulness, understand their emotions, and enhance their skill improvement. Many educators expressed several strategies for handling stress in the classroom, including breathing techniques, prayer and ignoring student behavior. All teachers

reported feeling triggered by either negative student behavior, safety concerns for students, typical educator tasks (grading, etc.) and a sense of limited efficacy with their craft.

Cohort participants showed improvement in pre and post CIMT intervention scores on the Self-Compassion Scale (SCS) (Neff, 2003) and the Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (FFMQ) (Baer, et al., 2006). All participants showed varying degrees of growth from pre-CIMT to post-CIMT on overall scores and subscales for both the SCS and FFMQ measure. For example, the cohort subscales of self-kindness, common humanity and mindfulness depicted in the SCS revealed positive growth. The same is seen in the cohort FFMQ subscales of observation, describing, and acting with awareness. Similar to the subscale scores of non-judgment and non-reactivity in the FFMQ, SCS subscale scores of self-judging, isolation and over-identification trend positive relative to pre-CIMT intervention. Since these scores are purely descriptive in nature, analysis of these data should be viewed with caution. Nearly half the cohort demonstrated substantial increases (+1) in their overall SCS scores on post testing. All participants showed improvement in their overall scores. This change could account for their motivation to take the class initially, and the depth of integration of course concepts, for example, compassion and mindfulness.

Nearly half the cohort showed substantial decreases in their SCS subscale scores of self-judgment. This was a telling sign in their willingness to reframe stressful experiences. Five of the eight participants showed improvements with the SCS subscale over-identification, indicating they were less involved in getting carried away with their personal stories. All concluding participants of CIMT showed improvement in their overall mindfulness scores on the FFMQ from earlier pre-testing. All but one member of the cohort showed an improvement in the

FFMQ subscale non-reactivity. All but one cohort member showed an increase in the FFMQ subscale ‘act with awareness.’

Meditation homework sheets provided deep analysis of cohort participation. Specifically, the homework sheets highlighted cohort challenges / barriers to mediation, supports to one’s practice and observation of meditation practice. A significant barrier to mediation practice was continued stress and worry, either by not performing meditation correctly or a general state of ‘busy mind.’ These data suggest for this cohort a busy mind was of concern. However, this is in keeping with the stated reasons for taking CIMT, learning how to “be in the moment.” Making meditation practice a routine was a present theme throughout the data. Once participants started meditating regularly, a desire to continue influenced their thinking. Meditating in a quiet location and with others were themes that emerged as supporting meditation. Cohort data also supports the theory that meditation promotes relaxation, and stability or “spaciousness’ of mind.

Interview data indicated the cohort resonated with the CIMT curriculum. A variety of themes were captured and transcribed in relation to cohort experience. Specifically, a palpable sense of greater self-awareness emerges from the interview data sets. Asked what they noticed about themselves as a result of taking CIMT, the cohort responded: more self-awareness, meditation being helpful in daily contexts, a greater sense of focus, a greater sense of calm and the need for developing a practice routine. Some teachers also reported developing an emerging meditation practice as a result of taking CIMT, while others stated the class deepened an existing meditation practice. When case participants were questioned about their understanding of self-kindness vs. self-judgment, a persistent theme emerged, a greater sense of self-critical awareness. Even though responses did not have a tinge of negativity, they underscored an awareness of their critical mind. Also reported in the data was the awareness that self-kindness was personally



meaningful, and modeling self-compassion in the classroom was pedagogically important.

Teachers spoke passionately of acting as ‘role models’ for their students. This is in keeping with the professional role of teachers. CIMT participants learned that thoughts are just thoughts, and by paying attention to a self-critical mind, mindfulness encourages a spaciousness of habit to become more aware of each moment.

Inquiring into the role of compassion in the classroom, teachers expressed the concepts of empathy, student focus, and positive relationships. Cohort participants learned that compassion for themselves, translates into compassion for others. Emerging from the data strand exploring common humanity vs. isolation, themes of acceptance, isolation and connection to others, were reflected in the post-CIMT interview. Teachers learned that “just like me” (Jinpa, 2015, p. 153) we all experience trauma and happiness and wish to be accepted by others. A point of emphasis regarding the teaching of mindfulness is the ability to curtail over-identifying with specific issues or problems. This was expressed by the cohort as increased awareness of their meditation practice and increased awareness of their critical and judgmental mindsets.

CIMT participants reported they dealt with their emotional responses in the classroom differently as a result of participation in the class. Teachers reported they were less inclined to react to classroom stimuli, but were more inclined to respond to classroom experiences. This reflects a mindful approach to the myriad of stimuli and emotions which populate a typical K-12 classroom experience. However, it remains open to interpretation if teachers actually experienced stressful events differently in the classroom as a result of participating in CIMT. Overall, the cohort expressed a positive tone surrounding the entire CIMT curriculum. Teachers learned that “letting go of thoughts and coming back to the breath” were pedagogically sound

principles to use in the classroom. Final suggestions for improvement and additional comments by the inaugural CIMT teacher support the case of CIMT.

## Chapter Five

### Conclusion

The protocol *Compassion Informed Mindfulness for Teachers* (CIMT) was conducted to explore the receptivity of compassion infused theory in the lives of educators. The underlying assumption was that few models exist for teachers to explore ways to address emotional and mental skills that promote healthy relationships, interpersonal awareness and emotional balance. Training in compassion demonstrates the efficacy of skills that “can be intentionally cultivated” (Jazaieri, et al., 2012). This study explored perceptions about the usefulness of compassion and mindfulness as a framework that educators might integrate into their daily lives. Significant to the question of mindfulness and education is its applicability to lowering stress. A strong argument can be inferred by the present data that teachers learned mental (meditation) and physiological (breathing) skills, which addressed compassion informed techniques to alleviate stress. Not only was CIMT a protocol to study, the findings support it can be a framework to live by.

CIMT was investigated through the ethnographic view of a bounded case study (Merriam, 2009). Case participants (8 total) agreed to attend a 6-week (90 min.) mindfulness-based intervention class specifically addressing the concepts of meditation, compassion, loving-kindness and common humanity. Mixed-methodological data gathering triangulated the following: written responses of motivation to participate; homework sheets clarifying supports, barriers and comments related to learning how to meditate; pre- and post-CIMT self-administered instruments, the Self-Compassion Scale (SCS) (Neff, 2003) and the Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (FFMQ) (Baer, et al., 2006); and concluding interviews with case participants and inaugural CIMT instructor. CIMT case findings suggests participants

meaningfully experienced the constructs of compassion, self-compassion and mindfulness as a result of CIMT.

CIMT corroborates earlier research supporting the efficacy of mindfulness in education. Current research suggests mindfulness-based intervention strategies show promise alleviating educator stress, while promoting positive emotional outcomes (Flook, et al., 2013; Jennings et al., 2017; Roeserr et al., 2012). Descriptions gleaned from CIMT data reflect participants were highly motivated to participate and created personal meaning of their experiences. Teachers reported greater awareness of their self-criticism, and reflected on meditation habits in relation to noticing a ‘busy mind.’ Meditation in daily contexts was captured by the depth of the cohort learning and specificity of instruction. Overall, analysis of CIMT data trends positive and supports a theory of mindfulness and compassion in education settings.

### **Findings: Research Question 1**

When provided the 6-week mindfulness-based intervention *Compassion Informed Mindfulness for Teachers*, what were the descriptions K-12 teachers reported in their assessment of compassion, self-compassion, and mindfulness in context to their roles as educators? Findings about compassion, self-compassion and mindfulness are summarized in the themes reported by CIMT participants identified through mindfulness and awareness

**Mindfulness.** Findings from CIMT show that participants learned mindfulness through the skill of meditation. This learning is reflected in the following comments of the cohort: “I recognized a sense of calmness with my task;” “worked through a lot of feelings and thoughts, just making space, not solving the problems;” and “spaciousness is easier for me to grasp.” Descriptive quantitative data support this claim. All cohort participants (N=8) showed increases in their over-all mindfulness profile on the FFMQ (pre-CIMT mean 3.25; post-CIMT mean

3.79). Subscale analysis of observation and non-reactivity of the FFMQ suggests cohort participants learned meditation skills attuned to mindful awareness (observation) and emotional spaciousness (non-reactivity). Similarly, subscale scores of mindfulness on the SCS reveal an increase from pre and post-CIMT intervention (pre-CIMT mean 3.35; post-CIMT mean 4.0). These data contribute to a growing body of research expanding on the efficacy of mindfulness-based interventions in education (Beshai, et al., 2016; Flook, et al., 2013; Gueldner & Feuerborn, 2016; Jennings, 2015; Jennings et al., 2017; Meiklejohn et al., 2012; Roeser, et al., 2013).

Insight meditation (Jinpa, 2015) emphasizes the equanimity of experience in which each moment is held without judgment. Thus, a non-reactive mind is characteristic of an openness to one's experience devoid of excessive criticism toward self or others, in essence greater overall compassion. This growth was also depicted in lower subscale scores of over-identification described in the SCS (pre-CIMT subscale mean 3.17; post-CIMT subscale mean 2.57) whereby decreased scores reflect positive growth. Lower over-identification scores reflect a self-compassionate strategy to assuage negative or difficult experiences.

**Awareness.** A sense of greater mental and emotional awareness populates the data sets. This was especially true in homework observations, the self-administered surveys and final interviews. Written and oral responses indicate cohort participants expressed greater awareness of their mental and emotional states. Learning awareness skills requires an openness which encourages oneself not to get carried away with their thinking (Neff, 2011). Being open to an increased awareness of self-criticism corresponds to mindfulness skills of non-reactivity, recognizing over-identification, and reduced self-judgment. These themes encompass a theory of emotional balance and mental skill, evidenced by the descriptive data. Cohort participants (N=8) showed substantial improvement in the subscale self-judgment (criticism) of the SCS

from pre to post-CIMT (3.08 to 2.34) in which lower scores reflect less self-criticism.

Awareness as a theme was reinforced through the descriptive measures administered to case participants. In both SCS and FFMQ profiles, cohort pre and post test scores showed noticeable growth. Each subscale of both the SCS and FFMQ also showed noticeable growth for pre to post CIMT.

### **Findings: Research Question 2**

When provided the 6-week mindfulness-based intervention *Compassion Informed Mindfulness for Teachers*, what were the descriptions K-12 teachers reported in their levels of stress in context to their roles as educators? Findings about stress and related topics attributed to CIMT were identified through the themes of emotional triggers.

**Levels of Stress.** The case narrative explored whether teachers responded to stress differently in their classrooms as a result of CIMT participation. Case participants reported varying techniques about addressing stress prior to CIMT. However, themes of acceptance and spaciousness emerged during CIMT, surrounding the perspective of re-framing negative experience(s). Taken as a whole, the CIMT cohort acknowledged stress exists in the lives of teachers. They were mindful of differing strategies to minimize its impact on themselves and their students. Tasks unrelated to instruction may increase emotional responses of teachers' stress. Mindfulness and compassion appear to have influenced cohort descriptions of their relationship to stress.

Increases in cohort mindfulness and self-awareness may suggest participants re-framed their stress differently. For example: "because of this class, I've become far slower in my reaction and far more reflective;" and "by not identifying with an issue, rather noticing that it's happening and noticing that maybe your temperature is starting to flare ... create spaciousness,

then you can look at things from a different angle.” Noticeable were the comments recorded during homework activity. The cohort voice was palpable, clarifying the depth of their experience. Participants responded with the following: “the idea of reframing experience;” “creating space, letting go of thoughts ... coming back to the breath;” and “the whole idea of non-identification with a stressor.” Even though the small sample size of the case limits the analysis of triangulated data between pre and post-CIMT, cohort responses suggests participants demonstrated greater mindfulness, increased self-kindness, and reduced self-criticism.

It’s important to recognize stress is an inherent feature of human nature (McGonigal, 2015). Approached from this perspective, stress is both negative and positive. Current thinking surrounding stress research centers on an ability to reframe emotional experiences, meaning what we think about often comes to fruition (McGonigal, 2012; 2015). If one believes stress is bad for themselves, this tends to be the case. The opposite is also true, when one believes stress is helpful to achieve goals, this tends to be the case. Similar in concept is the framework of mindset (Dweck, 2016). Cohort participants were highly motivated to attend CIMT (growth vs. fixed mindset) in which they viewed their participation as helpful. This attitude was exemplified in the CIMT data, and corroborated by the cohort voices: “to handle stress from my job;” “to take care of my emotional state on a deep level;” and “to have more tools handling difficult situations.” Responding rather than reacting to stress, both in the moment and remembered, creates a framework that promotes healthy relationships, interpersonal awareness and emotional balance. Not conclusive, but cohort data support the premise that participants approached stress differently, both in their classrooms and daily lives post-CIMT.

### **Role of the CIMT Teacher**

Research requires collaboration. The data retrieved in this study was reflective of the skilled instruction of the inaugural instructor. Case participants received high quality instruction related to mindfulness, compassion and common humanity. The teacher and CIMT cohort seemed to genuinely enjoy the instruction as reflected in final comments. The inaugural teachers' enthusiasm for teaching mindfulness comes across: "I enjoyed teaching the class and I am happy with the class;" "the students are really interested in the material and they ask questions;" and, "I feel like I am helping them with their mindfulness." During the course of the 6-week study, cohort members shared their esteem for the inaugural CIMT teacher, and insights they gleaned from his instruction. Sincerely dependent upon the CIMT curriculum delivery, was the depth of mindfulness content exhibited by the inaugural teacher. CIMT was fortunate to experience his compassionate and mindful presence.

### **Implications of Research**

This study contributes to a vibrant and growing body of literature related to mindfulness and education (Beshai, et al., 2016; Flook, et al., 2013; Gueldner & Feuerborn, 2016; Jennings, 2015; Jennings et al., 2017; Meiklejohn, et al., 2012; Roeser, 2013). The focus of the present research was exclusively on adult educators. CIMT demonstrates accordance with mindfulness-based interventions which promote positive outcomes for lay adults (Jazaieri, et al., 2012; Kirby, et al., 2017; Neff & Germer, 2012), teachers (Beshai, et al., 2016; Flook, et al., 2013; Gueldner & Feuerborn, 2016; Jennings et al., 2017; Meiklejohn, et al., 2012), and military veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Dahm, et al., 2015). A growing scientific nomenclature supports the efficacy of mindfulness and meditation practices. Mindfulness and compassion are evidenced by an increased ability to handle stress, increased compassion and



concern for self and others, an increased ability to focus and pay attention and enhanced positive relationships with others (Goleman & Davidson, 2017; Suttie, 2017).

As participant action science, the CIMT cohort addressed a fundamental core of transformative learning: being open to personal change. Mindfulness-based curriculums such as CIMT offer robust and meaningful instruction designed to bring a “heightened awareness of the assumptions behind [their] actions and interactions” (Raelin, 2006, p. 204). Personal change which engages the attention of the learner has profound implications in education settings, and by extension social networks. CIMT and other mindfulness-based interventions are positioned to engage teachers, first responders, health professionals and future leaders of many professions in the skills of self-awareness, mindfulness, and emotional balance.

The greatest implication from this study is the applicability of CIMT in educational settings, and by extension communities in which they reside. The entire premise of CIMT was addressing teacher mental and emotional coping skills through the framework of mindfulness (Beshai, et al., 2016; Flook, et al., 2013; Gueldner & Feuerborn, 2016; Jennings, 2015; Jennings et al., 2017; Meiklejohn, et al., 2012; Roeser, 2013). However, much of American society is suspicious of mindfulness practices’ due to its relationship with religious ideology (Jennings, 2016). The success of mindfulness initiatives (or curriculum) in public schools depends upon the “rational” of why such initiatives (mindfulness) are being considered in the first place. As Jennings (2016) asserts “introducing names, words or sounds that come from a religious or spiritual tradition ... is inappropriate in the secular public-school setting” (p. 177). Davidson, et al., from the Mind and Life Education Research Network further emphasize “any use of contemplative practices in schools must necessarily be thoroughly secular” (MLERN, 2012, p.

151). However, an explanation of the history of such practices should occur. Consider the following:

The suggestion is not that one should conceal the fact that such association between practices and religious and spiritual tradition exist. Rather, it is that educators be especially careful to ensure that the nature of the practices they are introducing, is indeed completely secular and science-based, and to explain clearly that the rationale for such practices is based on science, rather than belief. (Jennings, 2016, p. 177)

Mindfulness awareness in public education is truly in its infancy. Even though this study did not focus on student curricula, it bears pointing out that mindfulness education in the hands of untrained professionals, or individuals brought into school settings who are not cognizant of the need for secularity will inevitably disrupt the sensibilities of many students and their families (Jennings, 2016; MLERN, Davidson, et al., 2012). Educators who wish to employ mindful awareness practices must do so without the sheen of religiosity, but firmly grounded in the science of social-emotional learning (Lawlor, 2014).

Emphasizing mindful compassion, this study supports the widespread use of MBI's in school environments. Instructing teachers and other school personnel the skills of mindfully reframing difficult interactions might very well translate into positive classroom experiences. Children learn through the modeling of emotional cues (Hrady, 2009; Siegal, 2012). While mindfully attending to personal discomfort, teachers are in the position to exhibit positive strategies handling difficult experiences. Emotional contagion characteristics of schools and social groups in general have lasting effects. People internalize what they observe, reinforcing a default style of coping. Since teachers are in proximity with a large segment of the community

in one sitting - students, on a daily basis, it makes sense they are emotionally and mentally prepared for the demands of their craft.

### **Significance of the Study**

The preceding study is significant to the advancement of social science. Emerging as a full participant in social science inquiry, education is uniquely situated to contribute meaningful insights and data points, contributing to further understanding of human nature. The significance of this work is captured by the undeniable assertion that ‘teachers bring their lives with them into the classroom.’ An educator with over 31 years of experience, my observations support the claim, very little (if any) pedagogical processes (Jennings, et al., 2017) exist to help teachers manage mental acuity and emotional balance. CIMT offers such a process. The current applicability of CIMT and other MBI’s in school settings is difficult to fathom. It requires the willingness of school personnel to be open to change processes that are personal, not structural or environmental.

### **Recommendations for Action**

Contributing to the broad epistemology of mindfulness research, this study supports the applicability of MBI’s in education settings. During the 1970’s mindfulness in schools did not exist. Today, mindfulness and compassion integrate social and emotional learning themes deemed appropriate for healthy relationships and emotional balance in the lives of educators and students. Recommendations for action reflect the scope of this study. They include:

1. Integrate pedagogical approaches of mindfulness and compassion in education settings;
2. Instruct prominent stakeholders (Board of Trustees, senior administrators, site principals and teacher leaders) the pedagogical value of mindfulness and compassion theory as a framework benefiting entire communities;

3. Address mindfulness and compassion protocols in higher education, specifically leadership programs for administrators and credentialing programs for teachers;
4. Promote CIMT as a staff development protocol in local school districts; and strongly encourage district officials, especially site principals to participate in training;
5. Encourage networking of teachers and school employees that embrace mindfulness, and support opportunities to incorporate mindfulness in the professional work day.

### **Recommendations for Further Study**

Several recommendations for future research follow. First, an increase in the sample size of the population pool. The CIMT case demonstrated an interest in MBI curriculum (N=9) but efforts should be made to reach as many teachers as possible. Second, include psychometric survey measures capturing teacher stress or burnout. A limiting feature of the present study was capturing perceived teacher stress through qualitative data. Third, pair the CIMT protocol against an active control (such as a relaxation lecture) or wait-list participation. This would ensure post-CIMT results were due to participation in the CIMT protocol. Fourth, conduct a 3-month follow-up analysis with psychometric and qualitative surveys. This would gather data verifying the endurance of CIMT participation. Fifth, increase sessions from 90 minutes to 120 minutes. CIMT data suggests a longer period of time would have been useful. Mindfulness and compassion are relatively novel concepts in education, requiring space (time) to instruct effectively. Finally, compare group MBI effectiveness with various employee's status: support staff, elementary faculty, secondary faculty, and administrators. This type of analysis would highlight differences between coping strategies and perceived stressors amongst the employee groups. Mindfulness research has reached a pivotal moment in history. Buoyed by the rigor of neuroscience and social science paradigms, mindfulness in education is poised to inform future

generations about the personal and social benefits of compassion, self-awareness and common humanity.

Even though the CIMT case itself was small, descriptive analysis of these data suggests the mindfulness-based curriculum of CIMT was represented in the overall case analysis of this study. Additionally, participants seemed attuned to the concepts of compassion and suffering, with a deeper sense of mindfulness and acceptance. The intent of this study was to explore the descriptions of case participants. However, caution should inform further interpretation of findings. These data findings provide scaffolding to the overall theory of mindfulness and compassion as a viable construct of self-awareness for educators.

## **Conclusion**

Exploring the role of compassion and mindfulness in the lives of educators integrates the personal dimension of teacher experience with their pedagogical craft. *Compassion Informed Mindfulness for Teachers* was presented as a protocol to study (and implement) and a conceptual framework to live by. Understanding emotions in education settings was the central theme of this essay. A central tenant was posited, if teachers were mindful of their emotional ‘trigger’ points, even in the midst of difficult interactions, they and others would benefit from this awareness. The underlying presumption of this dissertation was whether mindfulness, expressed as compassion and self-compassion, have the capacity to assuage teacher emotional experiences associated with the classroom. CIMT explored descriptions of mindfulness, compassion and their relationship to stress. The protocol addressed the emotional and mental skills of teachers by promoting healthy relationships, interpersonal awareness, and emotional balance.

Teachers who participated in the 6-week CIMT curriculum learned meditation skills. This was evidenced by descriptive and qualitative analysis, clarifying the depth of skill

attainment. CIMT teachers also learned the concepts of spaciousness, self-awareness and the relationships of personal experience described by common humanity and over-identification. Cohort voices exemplified these learning outcomes, in their classrooms and daily lives. They expressed greater compassion and self-kindness as a result of participating in the study. Teachers in the cohort learned mental skills to re-frame emotional experiences, (reduced over-identification) creating space for emotional balance for themselves and their students. Finally, teachers in the case valued the instruction of CIMT and were eager to apply their newfound knowledge to their unique situations. Expressions of gratitude and excitement by the case cohort grace the closing comments provided by data collection. Teachers made meaning of their experience in CIMT. They were highly motivated to learn meditation skills, evidenced by the CIMT case.

The final thoughts of cohort participants suggest CIMT had a noticeable impact. As witness to the emergence and maintenance of the group, this researcher can attest to the genuine responses referenced earlier. The following cohort reflections are consistent with previous responses:

- I really hope ... this can continue to go on, that people can give themselves a chance to experience this; because I think it's incredibly important and so useful.
- It was great, so I hope it goes bigger than just the high school, I hope it goes district-wide, I hope it goes state-wide because education is so incredibly hard on so many levels.
- I think we can change the tune of this campus simply by saying this is what we went through, this is how we feel, this is what we came out ... I see the possibility of something so much greater here on the campus.

Engagement with CIMT suggests teachers were interested in looking beyond traditional measures of staff development, and embarked on a personal description of change. The multi-week curriculum provided as a mindfulness-based intervention, reinforced the continuity of process. Teachers teach from an orientation of ‘process.’ However, many faculty/teacher improvement initiatives often reflect single sitting summaries, or very specific test-score driven instruction carried out by education corporations. The length of CIMT and other MBI’s reinforce the concept of learning as process oriented, not devoid of employment or life interference. CIMT is a mindfully-based curriculum, whereby teachers engage in the meaningful work of personal transformation. Significant to this study was the cohort’s own interpretation of learning mindfulness-based skills that they deemed important. Young and veteran teachers alike will benefit from CIMT implementation.

CIMT advances the argument that mindfulness and meditation skills are valid pedagogical tools for educators. Neuroscience confirms emotions are present in all social settings (Damasio, 1992; Siegal, 2012). Nearly one hundred-thirty years prior, the father of American psychology, William James, theorized mental attention could be fostered through attentive self-reflection. His comments foreshadowed the present growth of mindfulness in our society, particularly education. Consider his insight circa. 1890:

But, whether the attention come by grace of genius or by dint of will, the longer one does attend to a topic, the more mastery of it one has. And the faculty of voluntarily bringing back a wandering attention, over and over again, is the very root of judgment, character and will. ... An education which should improve this faculty [attention] would be the education *par excellence*. But it is easier to define this ideal than to give practical directions for bringing it about. (James, 1890, p. 424)

Today, there is cautious optimism about the theory of mindfulness and compassion in educational settings. This could be the turning point to which James points out: that mindfulness and meditation is easier to define as an “ideal” than to give it “practical direction” in school settings. CIMT attempted to give practical direction to the “faculty of voluntarily bringing back a wandering attention” (James, 1890). Within the evolution of knowledge, sometimes science must catch-up with traditional wisdom.

The case of CIMT continues the argument mindfulness and meditation are complimentary pedagogical tools for educators. The validity of CIMT instruction could be inferred from the triangulated of descriptive and qualitative of data. Additionally, the efficacy of compassion and meditation practices reveal themselves in the classroom. Teachers who experienced differences between responding to stressors (mindfully) or reacting to stressors (mindlessly), modeled to their students (and colleagues) the importance of not-overidentifying with problems. Educators who understanding thoughts as just thoughts, create the spaciousness of mindfulness that views one’s experience in the light of “just like me” (Jinpa, 2015). We all participate in trauma, joy and everything in between.

Teachers who learn mindfulness skills are in the unique position to model and reinforce emotional balance through mindfulness. When teachers learn the skills of meditation and mindfulness for their personal benefit, classroom environments and school communities are affected. Participant action research offers a powerful model that educators can access to enact personal change through mindfulness pedagogy. Since change is personal, differential, and often elusive, providing skilled techniques (meditation) to educators addresses the importance of emotional balance in the pedagogical life of a classroom. Mindfulness in education settings may, or may not address higher test scores. But the presence of mindfulness in a school



community, is observed through its applicability within the range of pro-social behavior.

Teachers who re-frame emotional experiences from a framework of mindfulness model differing perspectives of coping strategies. From this perspective, an entire school community would reflect the maxim: “just like me.”

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## Appendix A



Institutional Review  
Board Mary  
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To: Michael Nolden  
Cc: Michelle Collay, Ph.D.  
From: Lliam Harrison, M.A., J.D.  
Date: December 14, 2018

Project # & Title: 18.12.13-010 Compassion Informed Mindfulness for Teachers

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Subjects has reviewed the materials submitted in connection with the above captioned project, and has determined that the proposed work is exempt from IRB review and oversight as defined by 45 CFR 46.104(d)(2).

Additional IRB review and approval is not required for this protocol as submitted. If you wish to change your protocol at any time, including after any subsequent review by any other IRB, you must first submit the changes for review.

Please contact Lliam Harrison at (207) 602-2244 or wharrison@une.edu with any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "William R. Harrison", is written over a light gray rectangular background.

William R. Harrison, M.A., J.D.

Director of Research Integrity

IRB#: 18.12.13-010

Submission Date: 12/13/18

Status: Exempt, 45 CFR 46.104(d)(2)

**Status Date: 12/14/18**

## Appendix B

### **Compassion Informed Mindfulness for Teachers**

This outline details the 6-week curriculum for *Compassion Informed Mindfulness for Teachers* (CIMT). Participants are encouraged to engage in daily sitting practice up to 20 minutes per day. The emphasis of CIMT is the consistency of practice, not length.

Week 1: Stability and Spaciousness. Mindful awareness of non-judgmental awareness, meditation, breath awareness, body awareness, relaxation, spaciousness and over-identification. Major theorists: Kabat-Zinn, Ph.D, Paul Goldstein, Sylvia Boorstein, Ph.D., and Alan Wallace, Ph.D.

Week 2: Cultivating Loving-Kindness. Loving-kindness is cultivating feelings of good will. It is relevant to all situations. Through the discipline of being still we make a courageous choice to be still (Salzberg, 1995) thus cultivating intention in our mind for the happiness of others and self. What unites our common humanity is an “urge for happiness.” Major theorists: Sharon Salzberg, Pemma Chodron, Thupten Jinpa, Ph. D.

Week 3: Cultivating Compassion for Another. Compassion is a response to suffering. It has the capacity to heal and strengthen individual resolve. Compassion for others is rooted in common humanity, and highlights the similarity of others as “just like me.” Major theorist: Thupten Jinpa, Ph.D., Kristin Neff, Ph.D., Chris Germer, Ph.D.

Week 4: Cultivating Loving-Kindness for Self. Loving-kindness for self is defined as clear seeing, having an honest appraisal of self. Honesty, kindness, humor and good heartedness prompt awaking in our hearts (Chodron, 2016). Cultivating kindness for ourselves is a genuine wish to be happy and avoid suffering. Major theorists: Sharon Salzberg, Pemma Chodron, Thupten Jinpa, Ph. D., Kristin Neff, Ph.D.

Week 5: Cultivating Compassion for Self. Self-Compassion is literally compassion for oneself. Treating oneself kindly provides health and psychological benefits. Self-compassion deals with negative self-criticism, harmful projection toward others and enhances relationships. Major theorist: Thupten Jinpa, Ph. D., Kristin Neff, Ph.D., Chris Germer, Ph.D., Matthieu Ricard.

Week 6: Compassion Informed Mindfulness in the Classroom. Compassion and the art of teaching. Teachers learn to recognize stress / trigger points and compassionate responses. Recognizing the strength of loving-kindness to re-frame difficult experiences. Understanding that everyone suffers, and recognizing compassion is always a response to suffering. Major theorist: Patricia Jennings, Ph.D., Pemma Chodron, Tara Brach, Ph.D., Sharon Salzberg.

*CIMT outline and curriculum is the collaboration of Andy Wallace, Ph.D, and Michael Nolden, Ed.D.*

## **Week 1: Cultivating Stability and Spaciousness**

This unit introduces the concepts of mindfulness as self-awareness, cultivating stability and spaciousness and sitting meditation. Central to discussion will be exploration of the breath. Breath awareness through intentional breathing exercises provide the framework for sitting meditation. Students will be introduced to sustaining self-awareness, benefits of compassion, over-identification with mental states and definitions of mindfulness. Through breath awareness, mindfulness and compassion direct the meditation experience.

### **Theme - Mindfulness as Self-awareness**

#### Instructional Goals

1. Introduce the concepts of mindfulness, spaciousness and sitting meditation.
2. Introduce intentional breathing techniques; provide examples.
3. Introduce sitting meditation and the concept of ‘practice.’

#### Enduring & Essential Questions

1. What is mindfulness?
2. What is compassion?
3. What is over-identification?
4. What is the advantage of compassion and mindfulness for teachers?

#### Activity

1. Introduction (20 min)
  - A. Teacher Introduction
  - B. Course Description
    1. Definitions of Compassion and Mindfulness
    2. Benefits of Compassion and Mindfulness
    3. Sequencing of Weeks
    4. Homework
    5. Guidelines
      - a. Not therapy, listen without fixing
      - b. Confidentiality
      - c. Resistance
2. Group Introduction (10-15 min)
3. Setting Intention (10 min)
4. Pedagogy (20 min)
  - a. Awareness and Self-Awareness
  - b. Sustaining Self-Awareness
  - c. Non-identification and identification with Mental States
  - d. Framing experience (implicit biases)
  - e. Mindfulness of Breath and Body
5. Mindfulness of Breath Practice (10 minutes)
6. Explain home practice (10 min)
7. Closing Gesture and Poem (5 min)

## **Week 2: Cultivating Loving-Kindness.**

Loving-kindness is cultivating feelings of good will. It is relevant to all situations. Through the discipline of being still we make a courageous choice to be still (Salzberg, 1995) thus cultivating intention in our mind for the happiness of others and self. What unites our common humanity is an “urge for happiness.” Major theorists: Sharon Salzberg, Pemma Chodron, Thupten Jinpa, Ph.D.

### **Theme - Nurture & Flourishing**

#### Instructional Goals

1. Introduce loving-kindness.
2. Explore the concept of loving-kindness from an embodied feeling or experience.
3. Articulate the role of evolution and the psychology of altruism
4. Introduce compassionate image and loving-kindness practice.

#### Enduring & Essential Questions

1. Why should teachers explore loving-kindness in relation to pedagogical theory?
2. What is loving-kindness? How is it different from ‘just’ caring for someone?
3. What is the concept of common humanity?
4. What is the role of cooperation from a multilevel perspective?

#### Activity

1. Settling the Mind (10 min)
2. Review of previous week pedagogy and home practice (20 min)
3. Pedagogy (15-20 min)
  - a. Definition of loved one
  - b. Definition of loving-kindness
  - c. Essential to recognize what it feels like in the body to feel loving-kindness
  - d. Science of Nurture
    1. Evolution
    2. Psychology
4. Compassionate Image and loving-kindness practice (10 min)
5. Embodying positive feeling-states (10 min)
6. Homework (5)
7. Closing Gesture and Poem (5 min)

### **Week 3: Cultivating Compassion for Another**

Compassion is a response to suffering. It has the capacity to heal and strengthen individual resolve. Compassion for others is rooted in common humanity, and highlights the similarity of others as “just like me.” Major theorist: Thupten Jinpa, Ph.D., Kristin Neff, Ph.D., Chris Germer, Ph.D.

#### **Theme - Common Humanity & Empathic Concern**

##### Instructional Goals

1. Introduce the concept of compassion.
2. Discuss the definition of common humanity.
3. Discuss prosocial dispositions to care for the welfare of others.
4. Introduce the concept of reaction vs. responding to life events. Explore the concept of equanimity.
5. Understand external and internal experiences of suffering.
6. Discuss self-compassion in relation to pedagogical environments.

##### Essential & Enduring Questions

1. What is the importance of the theory “just like me” (Jinpa, 20015, p. 153)?
2. How can compassion be cultivated?
3. Why should teachers consider a theory of compassion and self-compassion in relation to their pedagogical craft?

##### Activity

1. Settling the Mind (10 min)
2. Review of previous week pedagogy (10)
3. Review of home practice (10)
4. Pedagogy (20)
  - a. Definition of compassion
  - b. Definition of common humanity
  - c. Interbeing
  - d. Empathic concern
5. Empathic attunement exercise (20 min)
6. Homework (5 min)
7. Closing Gesture and Poem (5 min)



## **Week 4: Cultivating Loving-Kindness for Self**

Loving-kindness for self is defined as clear seeing, having an honest appraisal of self. Honesty, kindness, humor and good heartedness prompt awaking in our hearts (Chodron, 2016). Cultivating kindness for ourselves is a genuine wish to be happy, appreciate joy and gratitude and avoid suffering. Major theorists: Sharon Salzberg, Pemma Chodron, Thupten Jinpa, Ph. D.

### **Theme - Befriending & Appreciating Oneself**

#### Instructional Goals.

1. Investigate a theory of cultivating loving-kindness for self in the lives of teachers.
2. Introduce aspiration for happiness is innate
3. Distinguish between loving-kindness and self and egoistic self-love
4. Discuss the concept of flourishing and self-kindness

#### Enduring & Essential Questions

1. What does Loving-kindness for the self, look like?
2. What is the value of self-awareness?
3. Does a theory of flourishing relate to the needs of educators?
4. Is compassion contagious? Are students impacted by the behavior of adults?

#### Activity

1. Settling the Mind (10 min)
2. Review of previous week (10)
3. Review of home practice (10)
4. Pedagogy (20 min)
  - a. Aspiration for happiness is innate
  - b. Self-appreciation
  - c. Appreciating joy
  - d. Appreciating gratitude and forgiveness
  - e. Distinguish between loving-kindness for self and egoistic self-love
5. Self-Appreciation Exercise (20 min)
6. Home practice (5)
7. Closing Gesture and Poem (5)

## **Week 5: Cultivating Compassion for Self.**

Self-Compassion is literally compassion for oneself. Treating oneself kindly provides health and psychological benefits. Self-compassion deals with negative self-criticism, harmful projection toward others and enhances relationships. Major theorist: Kristin Neff, Ph.D., Chris Germer, Ph.D., Matthieu Ricard Ph.D.

### **Theme - Self-Acceptance & Self-Kindness**

#### Instructional Goals

1. Discuss the impact of self-criticism, rumination, negative thinking and emotional health.
2. Discuss compassion, self-compassion in context to the demands of educators.
3. Introduce loving-kindness and self-compassion to reframe difficult emotional experiences.
4. Identify underlying needs that motivate self-criticism.
5. Discuss over-identification with difficult experiences and people.
6. Bring mindful awareness to all activity.

#### Essential & Enduring Questions

1. How are difficult emotional experiences reframed by self-compassion?
2. What is the efficacy of mindfulness in the workplace?
3. What does compassion look like in daily life? In work life?
4. How can self-compassion assuage a worry mind?
5. What does it mean to reframe one's experiences?
6. What are the emotional and health benefits of self-compassion?

#### Activity

1. Settling the Mind (10 min)
2. Review of previous week (10 min)
3. Review of home practice (10 min)
4. Pedagogy (20 min)
  - a. Mindfulness of the judgmental mind
  - b. Negative self-judgment and unhappiness
  - c. Reframing negative self-talk
  - d. Identify underlying needs that motivate self-criticism
5. Self-acceptance and self-forgiveness exercise (20 min)
6. Home practice (5 min)
7. Closing Gesture and Poem (10 min)

## **Week 6: Compassion Informed Mindfulness in the Classroom**

Compassion and the art of teaching. Teachers learn to recognize stress / trigger points and compassionate responses. Recognizing the strength of loving-kindness to re-frame difficult experiences. Understanding everyone suffers, and recognizing compassion is always a response to suffering. Major theorist: Patricia Jennings, Ph.D., Pemma Chodron, Tara Brach, Ph.D., Sharon Salzberg.

### **Theme - Coping with Reactivity**

#### Instructional Goals

1. Discuss compassion and the role of emotional triggers.
2. Highlight major themes: compassion, mindfulness, common humanity.
3. Discuss the theory of ‘shenpa’ (recognizing emotional trigger points) and self-compassion.
4. Understand compassion is always a response to suffering

#### Essential & Enduring Questions

1. How can emotional trigger points be assuaged by a theory of self-compassion?
2. What are the advantages of a compassion framework in the classroom?
3. What does it mean: “teachers bring their lives into the classroom?”
4. What is empathy distress?
5. What is the concept of compassion fatigue?
6. Does mindfulness and compassion really work?

#### Activity

1. Settling the Mind (10)
2. Review previous week (10)
3. Review home practice (10)
4. Pedagogy (20-25)
  - a. Explain notion of shenpa
  - b. Explain noticing reactivity in the body
  - c. Strategies for reframing and processing reactivity to response
  - d. Empathic concern for self and other
5. Breathe in, Breathe out exercise (10)
6. Eyes on exercise (10)
7. Discussion
8. Closing Gesture and Poem

## Appendix C

### Interview Questions & Writing Prompt

#### Pre-CIMT Mindfulness-Based Intervention Writing Prompts

1. Please describe your motivation for taking CIMT. What do you hope to gain / learn in relation to your professional duties as a teacher?
2. How do you view and handle stressful events in the classroom? Please write about your perceptions on the role emotions play in the professional lives of teachers.
3. What event(s) or circumstances have triggered an emotional response in relation to your professional duties as a teacher?

#### Post-CIMT Mindfulness-Based Intervention Interview Questions

1. What have you noticed about yourself as a result of taking CIMT?
2. Have you developed a meditation practice since taking CIMT? If so, how is it going?
3. How does your understanding of self-kindness versus self-judgement relate to your experience as a teacher? (Follow-up)
4. How does your understanding of compassion translate into classroom experiences?
5. How do you interpret the concept of shared common humanity versus feelings of isolation in relation to your experience as a teacher? (Follow-up)
6. How does understanding of mindfulness versus feelings of over-identification inform your professional life as a teacher? (Follow-up)
7. Do you address emotional triggers in the classroom the same or differently from taking CIMT? Explain.
8. Over the last several weeks, what a-ha moments can you attribute to taking CIMT?
9. In what way did you use the buddy system? Did you find it helpful or not helpful?

## 10. Last thoughts?

### CIMT Instructor Mid-Point Questions

1. What is your appraisal of the course so far? How do you feel about your participation as teacher of CIMT?
2. What problems or successes (if any) have you encountered with the class?
3. At mid-point, what insights do you have to improve CIMT?

### CIMT Instructor End of Course Questions

1. What were your reasons for teaching CIMT? Do you think the CIMT curriculum was effective?
2. Were there any moments while teaching the class that stood out from others?
3. What are recommendations for future CIMT courses?

## Appendix D

CIMT Meditation Worksheet

Week: \_\_\_\_\_

Day	Time of Day	How long (mins.)	What supported your practice	What was most <b>challenging</b> (i.e. making time, avoidance, resistance, etc.)?	Observations during or after you meditated	Questions for next week's class &/ or for further learning
1						
2						
3						
4						
5						
6						

(Adapted from Compassion Cultivation Training, CCARE)

### Appendix E

Andy Wallace, Ph.D., is professor and chair of philosophy at Sonoma State University (SSU), Rohnert Park, CA. Dr. Wallace is an experienced contemplative scholar with over 20 years of meditation practice and study, notably with Donald Rothberg at Spirit Rock Meditation Center, Woodacre, CA. He co-teaches with Jessica Hobson, Ph.D., (SSU) an interdisciplinary course on the science of compassion cultivation, titled *The Heart of Wisdom*. Dr. Wallace is a trained Compassion Cultivation Training (CCT) teacher, sponsored by Stanford University's Center for Compassion and Altruism Research and Education (CCARE). Professor Wallace was involved in the curricular development of CIMT. He contributed to lesson design and CIMT implementation, while providing counsel clarifying compassion through informed mindfulness.