A Loving-Kindness Intervention: Boosting Compassion for Self and Others

A dissertation presented to

the faculty of

the College of Arts and Sciences of Ohio University

In partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Philosophy

David T. Weibel

November 2007
This dissertation titled

A Loving-Kindness Intervention: Boosting Compassion for Self and Others

by

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ABSTRACT

WEIBEL, DAVID, T., Ph.D., November 2007, Psychology

A Loving-Kindness Intervention: Boosting Compassion for Self and Others (124 pp.)

Director of Dissertation: Timothy M. Anderson

Loving-kindness meditation is a millennia old tradition for increasing positive emotions such as love, kindness, and compassion. To date the only published loving-kindness intervention focused mainly on pain and psychological symptom variables. Thus, the ability of loving-kindness meditation to boost compassion has not been studied in a controlled scientific study. The current study compared the effects of a four-session loving-kindness intervention to a non-intervention control group on the variables of self-compassion, compassionate love, and trait anxiety. A repeated measures design (pre, post, two month follow-up) showed an overall time by group interaction, and univariate tests revealed that the loving-kindness group showed greater increases in self-compassion and compassionate love at post-treatment, and a greater increase in self-compassion and a greater decrease in trait anxiety at follow-up. The Discussion highlights the potential for future research into methods of boosting compassionate attitudes and emotions as well as exploring the potential secondary benefits of these attitudes and emotions.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My deep appreciation goes to my advisor, Dr. Timothy Anderson, for his guidance throughout this project and all of graduate school, and for teaching me about change, interventions, and interpersonal processes. I would like to express appreciation to my committee members, Dr. John Garske, Dr. Elizabeth Collins, Dr. Jeanne Heaton, and Dr. Kenneth Holroyd.

Many thanks to my two facilitators, Stephanie and Francisco Lopez, and my research assistants on this project, Jessica Grandy, Karen Jacobs, and Christina Piedrahita. I would like to thank the participants for their honest efforts and bravery while engaging in difficult meditative practices.

Thanks to James Carson for his example and advice, and to Jon Kabat-Zinn, who opened western medicine to eastern interventions. Thanks to the great spiritual, meditation, and compassion teachers who established the foundation upon which this paper is built.

I would like to thank all my family and friends who were patient and supportive as I shifted careers and undertook this long journey, and my deepest gratitude goes to Dale Weibel, Linda Weibel, Pat Goss, Harry Stevens, Stephen Weibel, Maximillian Mayer, Stan Otani, Janet Roberts, Melissa Meyers, Laurie Fox, Erin Coyle, Patrick Hanlin, Francisco Lopez, Stephanie Lopez, Gary Riekes, Stanley Drake, Paula Andrassi, and Brian Uhlin.
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INTRODUCTION

Loving-kindness meditation involves using silent mental phrases that focus on the inherent connectedness in the world and the universality of the desire to be happy and free from suffering to cultivate attitudes, intentions, and feelings of love, kindness, and compassion, first for oneself and then for a sequence of other recipients that typically includes a loved one, a friend, a neutral person, one’s community, a person with whom one has difficulties, all people, or all beings (Chödrön, 1996; Salzberg, 1995). The love which would be expected to emerge from loving-kindness meditation is an all-encompassing love for humanity, and in fact all of existence (Gyatso, 2001), similar to the Christian tradition of agape (Post, 2002). This compassionate love arises from an understanding of the connectedness of all life forms and can be practiced in the absence of suffering. To enjoy another’s joy would also be called compassionate, as would wishing another well in the absence of suffering (Gyatso, 2001).

Loving-kindness meditation falls within the larger category of meditation techniques. Meditation techniques are a family of self-regulation practices that focus on training attention and awareness to bring mental processes under greater voluntary control and thereby foster general mental well-being and development and/or specific cognitive and affective states such as calm, clarity, and concentration, or love, kindness, and compassion in the case of loving-kindness meditation (Walsh & Shapiro, 2006). Research on meditation has been underway for at least forty years (For review see Murphy & Donovan, 2004), with research on mindfulness and acceptance based
techniques experiencing a rapid surge of interest (For review see Baer, 2005). In comparison, little research has been focused on loving-kindness meditation (Walsh & Shapiro, 2006), especially given its traditional role as a close second to mindfulness meditation in terms of its importance to the overall aims of Buddhist meditation (Gyatso, 2001).

Western academic research on loving-kindness meditation is just beginning. Two recent studies (Goleman, 2003; Lutz, Lawrence, Rawlings, Ricard, & Davidson, 2004) used electroencephalograms to examine the effects of loving-kindness meditation on advanced meditators’ brains. Lutz et al (2004) compared the brain patterns of eight Tibetan monks, long-term practitioners of loving-kindness meditation, and a group of ten novice meditators who were given six weeks of meditation training. The authors measured "gamma-band" rhythms, a range of fast-frequency oscillations in brain activity that are associated with higher mental activity such as attention, learning and conscious perception. During the baseline or resting state the advanced meditators displayed a significantly higher ratio of gamma-band rhythms to slow rhythms than controls (p < .001). Then, during the loving-kindness meditation, gamma-band rhythms increased for both the long-term meditators and controls (p < .05), yet this increase in gamma band rhythms was higher for the long-time meditators than for the controls (p < .05). In summary, the meditators showed a different baseline pattern of gamma-band rhythms than the controls, and during the loving kindness meditation the meditators’ gamma-band rhythms increased significantly more in amplitude. The authors posited that loving
kindness meditation may alter patterns of brain functioning. This study is certainly limited by the small sample size and the possibility of third variable explanations, such as the possibility that a monastic lifestyle in Tibet led to changes rather than the specific loving-kindness meditation. Nevertheless, the possibility that meditation alters the brain in a systematic and beneficial manner is generating scientific interest and interesting collaborations between western neuroscientists and eastern contemplative scientists (see Mind and Life Institute, 2007).

In another study (Davidson reported by Goleman, 2003) that utilized electroencephalograms, an advanced meditator practicing loving-kindness meditation showed an extreme leftward shift in his prefrontal brain activation. The advanced meditator had the most extreme value of leftward prefrontal activation of the 175 healthy, normal people Davidson had previously measured. Left-sided activation in several anterior regions has been observed during certain forms of positive emotional expression and in subjects with more dispositional positive affect (For review see Davidson, 2005). In the above case of the single advanced meditator (Goleman, 2003), the quantitative evidence of a leftward shift in brain electrical activity was corroborated by the meditators’ account that he found the loving-kindness meditation to be highly enjoyable and pleasant. This study is again limited by a small sample, potential third variable explanations, and the fact that it was reported in an anecdotal fashion in a secondary reference.
Although the small studies using advanced meditators (Lutz et al, 2004; Goleman, 2003) are difficult to interpret and generalize, they do provide some preliminary and hard anecdotal evidence to corroborate the long held claims of Buddhist practitioners about the benefits of loving-kindness meditation (Chödrön, 1991). These studies have generated a great deal of interest among scientists (Mind and Life Institute, 2007) and raise questions about how an intervention based on loving-kindness meditation might benefit people who are not dedicated to a monastic lifestyle (Goleman, 2003).

People who were not following a monastic lifestyle have been exposed to loving-kindness meditation as a small component of Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR; Kabat-Zinn, 1990). MBSR has experienced a rapid surge of interest in the academic literature and has shown average effect sizes of .5 treating a number of conditions including anxiety, psoriasis, cancer, and heart disease (Baer, 2005; Grossman, Niemann, Schmidt, & Walach, 2004). One example of an MBSR study found that randomly assigned employees of a biotechnology company who participated in an MBSR group experienced significant reductions in trait anxiety and increases in antibody production in response to an influenza vaccine than persons assigned to a wait-list control group (Davidson et al., 2003). Furthermore, electroencephalograms revealed that the MBSR group showed significant increases in left-sided activation in the anterior cortical area, a pattern associated with dispositional positive affect (Davidson, 2005), as compared to the wait-list controls, and that among the subjects in the MBSR group, those who showed the greatest pre-to-post increase in left-sided anterior cortical activation
displayed a significantly larger rise in antibody production, whereas there was no significant relationship for control subjects. Studies such as this have generated a large amount of interest in MBSR and other applications of mindfulness (Walsh & Shapiro, 2006). While MBSR has exposed thousands of people to loving-kindness meditation within research and clinical settings, MBSR’s multicomponent nature makes it difficult to determine how much loving-kindness meditation contributes to outcomes.

Within MBSR, loving-kindness meditation is practiced once within an eight-week course making it difficult to determine how much the loving-kindness meditation contributes to outcomes. Anecdotal reports indicate that participants value the loving-kindness meditation within MBSR (Kabat-Zinn, 1990; Kabat-Zinn, 2005; Kristeller & Johnson, 2005; Santorelli, 1999), and Kabat-Zinn (1995) has also stated that loving-kindness is “the ground of mindfulness practice” (p. 5). In this instance Kabat-Zinn is referring to the attitude or intention of loving-kindness, which can be cultivated or practiced at any moment whether meditating or not. The formal practice of loving-kindness meditation, however, involves a dedicated period of time practicing the specific techniques of loving-kindness meditation (e.g., one thirty minute session during the all day retreat within MBSR). Thus, when Kabat-Zinn calls the attitude or intention of loving kindness the “ground” of MBSR, it seems clear that he values both the formal practice of loving-kindness meditation and the attitudes or intentions associated with loving-kindness, which can be practiced formally or informally, and may in fact permeate all of MBSR.
According to Kabat-Zinn (2005), the attitude of loving-kindness is so pervasive within MBSR that it “obviates the need” (p. 254) for more formal loving-kindness meditation. The rationale given for not including more formal loving-kindness meditation in MBSR was a concern that frequently practicing both mindfulness and loving-kindness meditations might confuse MBSR participants, as mindfulness focuses on simply noticing and observing the current moment in non-judgmental and accepting manner, while loving-kindness focuses on cultivating a specific mental state (Kabat-Zinn, 2005). It may also be important to note that MBSR is based on the Vipassana tradition, which focuses less on direct compassion meditations than the Mahayana tradition, and particularly Tibetan Buddhism (Smith & Novak, 2004). It may be important for western researchers to note that there are several variations of Buddhist practice on which they can base interventions.

Kristeller and Joshson (2005) also believe that mindfulness and loving-kindness meditation are complementary and not potentially confusing. They propose that mindfulness meditation, which excels at suspending self-focused thoughts, and loving-kindness meditation, which explicitly directs the mind and affective system toward compassion, may be an ideal combination for developing love, compassion, and altruism. Further, it remains an empirical question whether mindfulness obviates the need for more formal loving-kindness practice. Thus, increasing the percentage of time spent in loving-kindness mediation as compared to MBSR to create and study what might be called loving-kindness interventions could broaden the field of eastern psychology interventions.
and determine if loving-kindness interventions lead to different outcomes than mindfulness interventions.

Only one published study (Carson et al., 2005) has delivered a loving-kindness focused intervention. Carson et al (2005) designed an eight-session loving-kindness intervention intended to produce an affective shift from more negative to more positive emotions, and thus hopefully reduce chronic back pain. The eight-session loving-kindness group contained loving kindness meditations, didactic presentations (e.g., gate control model of pain, effects of long-held anger), group discussions, a body scan exercise encouraging participants to accept their body and develop gratitude for what their body allows them to do, and homework. Because of higher dropouts in the loving kindness condition (13 of 31) versus the standard care control (5 of 30), and initial differences on several of the dependent variables, the authors conducted univariate analyses within each group. Mean effect sizes were .42 for Pain variables (Pain Intensity, Usual Pain, p’s < .05), and .51 for psychological variables (Overall Psychological Distress, Anxiety, Daily Anger & Tension, p’s <.05). The self-reported amount of minutes practicing loving-kindness meditation on a given day predicted Daily Anger scores on the next day (p < .01).

Carson et al (2005) were the first to deliver a loving-kindness focused intervention in a western healthcare setting. Although there was high dropout in the treatment group, chronic pain patients have traditionally had difficulty adhering to treatments which required them to regularly attend sessions (Walco, Sterling, Conte, &
Engel, 1999). Thus, it would be premature to determine that the loving-kindness intervention was not palatable to the patients, leading to higher dropouts. Future loving-kindness meditation studies using other populations can examine if participants drop out at high rates. The effect sizes of .4-.5 were comparable to both mindfulness (Grossman et al., 2004) and psychotherapy interventions (Lambert & Ogles, 2003), encouraging future research. Because Carson et al (2005) were targeting back pain and psychological symptoms with their loving-kindness intervention, they did not examine positive psychology variables, presenting an opportunity for the current study to examine the ability of loving-kindness meditation to deliver positive psychology outcomes.

Several researchers (Aronson, 2004; Brazier, 2000; Dimidjian & Linehan, 2003; Wallace, 2006; Walsh & Shapiro, 2006) believe that testing positive psychology outcomes of meditation interventions is culturally respectful, in terms of testing hypotheses aligned with the progenitors’ intentions for the techniques, and scientifically prudent, in that it may lead to a fuller understanding of the mechanisms of the techniques, as well as capitalize on the full potential of the techniques to make peoples’ lives better. Perhaps the most central of the positive benefits traditionally associated with loving-kindness meditation are a sense of compassion, love, and kindness both toward oneself and the entire world (Salzberg, 1995).

The current study tested whether a four-session loving-kindness intervention for college students could boost self-compassion and compassionate love for others. Loving-kindness meditation has also traditionally served as a remedy for negative mind states
Therefore, the current study also hypothesized that loving-kindness meditation could lower anxiety, perhaps the most pervasive human mental affliction (Barlow, Pincus, Heinrichs, & Choate, 2003). The current study compared a four-week loving-kindness intervention to an inactive control group, hypothesizing that the loving-kindness intervention would boost self-compassion and compassionate love for others while reducing trait anxiety among college students.

**METHOD**

**Participants**

Participants were seventy-one undergraduates from a public Midwestern university who earned research credit as part of psychology courses. In several psychology courses, including Psychology 101, students can participate in research studies or write a short paper. They have a choice of many studies in which to participate. They receive one hour of credit for every hour of research in which they participate. They also receive credit for every hour they complete, regardless of whether they complete the entire intervention.

The sample was 77% female with a mean age of 19.1 years (SD = 1.17) and was 78% Caucasian, 17% African-American, 3% Hispanic, and 2% other. Dropout rates did not differ significantly between the loving-kindness (3 of 38 at post-intervention, 4 of 38 at two month follow-up) and the control groups (5 of 33 at post-intervention, 7 of 33 at two month follow-up). Regression and t-tests revealed that neither treatment condition, gender, and religious orientation predicted dropout, and that dropouts were not
significantly different than completers on pre-treatment measures. In the loving-kindness group 31 of 35 participants who completed the intervention attended all four sessions, and the remaining three completers attended three of four sessions. Whether these participants in the loving-kindness group attended three or four sessions did not predict change in any of the post-intervention outcome variables.

**Procedures**

Participants signed up for the informed consent meeting after viewing a description of the study on the web based experiment management system. After signing the informed consent form and completing the pre-intervention surveys, participants were randomized into the loving-kindness or control condition. As each participant handed in their surveys they were handed a randomly sorted card which indicated whether they were in the intervention or control group. Their group status was recorded, and they were given a choice of which night to attend the loving-kindness group or to fill out the post-intervention surveys in the control group. At the end of sessions two, three, and four, the participants were asked to fill out a weekly meditation diary which measured how much time they were spending meditating outside the group. Participants in the control group filled out post-intervention outcome surveys in separate meeting rooms at the same time as participants in the loving-kindness group. Participants were mailed follow-up surveys two months after the end of the intervention along with $10 as a thank you for participating.
Loving-Kindness Intervention

The loving-kindness intervention consisted of four weekly 90-minute sessions in a group format with 10-12 participants per group. Three facilitators each led one of the groups which occurred on three different week nights. Due to a scheduling conflict, one participant attended one group one week and then switched to another group for the remaining three weeks. All other participants remained with their group to promote group cohesiveness.

The intervention contained both mindfulness and loving-kindness meditations. In one of the few theory papers in a western academic journal on loving kindness meditation, Kristeller and Johnson (2005) proposed that mindfulness meditation, which excels at suspending self-focused thoughts, and loving-kindness meditation, which explicitly directs the mind and affective system toward compassion, may be an ideal combination for developing love, compassion, and altruism. Thus, the intervention started with equal percentages of mindfulness and loving-kindness meditation and slowly shifted to focusing more on loving-kindness meditation. However, throughout the intervention, participants were still encouraged to remain mindful while in their daily lives and while practicing loving-kindness.

A manual was developed including scripts for all exercises, meditations, and psychoeducation sessions (see Appendix F). The first author wrote all the meditation scripts and psychoeducation materials based on the works of modern mediation teachers (Chödrön, 1996; Goldstein, 1993; Gyatso, 2001; Hanh, 1976; Kabat-Zinn, 1994; Kabat-
Zinn, 2005; Kornfield, 2002; Salzberg, 1995), meditations as practiced in current western interventions (Kabat-Zinn, 1990; 2005; Carson et al, 2005), and his own experiences leading meditation groups for college students. MBSR served as a model of how to deliver a group with Buddhist origins to a broad audience in a western secular setting while still preserving the core message of the techniques (Kabat-Zinn, 1990; Kabat-Zinn, 2005; Santorelli, 1999). A session by session breakdown of the activities (excluding the introductions to each of the meditations) is listed in Table 1.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities of the Loving-kindness Intervention</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Session 1</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Strawberry exercise</td>
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<tr>
<td>Overview of the intervention</td>
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<td>Mindfulness meditation</td>
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<td>Processing &amp; discussion</td>
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<tr>
<td>Loving-kindness meditation</td>
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<td>Processing &amp; discussion</td>
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<tr>
<td>Summary &amp; preview</td>
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<td><strong>Session 2</strong></td>
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<td>Check-in</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mindfulness meditation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Processing &amp; discussion</td>
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<td>Psychoeducation: Benefits of connectedness, compassion, &amp; love</td>
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<tr>
<td>Loving-kindness meditation</td>
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<td>Processing &amp; discussion</td>
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<td>Summary &amp; preview</td>
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<td><strong>Session 3</strong></td>
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<td>Check-in</td>
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<tr>
<td>Loving-kindness meditation with person with whom one has difficulties</td>
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<tr>
<td>Processing &amp; discussion</td>
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<tr>
<td>Psychoeducation: Transferring loving-kindness to daily life</td>
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<tr>
<td>In vivo loving-kindness meditation</td>
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<td>Processing &amp; discussion</td>
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<td>Summary &amp; preview</td>
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<td><strong>Session 4</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Check-in</td>
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<tr>
<td>Loving-kindness meditation</td>
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<td>Processing &amp; discussion</td>
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<tr>
<td>Group discussion of the intervention thus far</td>
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<tr>
<td>Loving-kindness with visualized action plan meditation</td>
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The strawberry exercise was modeled on the strawberry exercise which begins MBSR, except there was a greater focus on the connectedness symbolized by the strawberry. The mindfulness exercises involved paying attention to the breath at the belly, the breath at the nose, the entire path of the breath, the entire body, and also allowed time for open-awareness of any sensations. The standard loving-kindness meditations used in sessions one, two, and four moved through several steps: 1) sitting or lying with closed eyes in relaxed posture, and mindfully focusing on the breath and body, 2) imagining receiving love, kindness, and compassion from a person who loves or has loved you deeply. 3) Allowing that person who loved you deeply to fade out of your awareness and attempting to send the same feelings of kindness, love, acceptance, unconditional regard, and compassion to yourself. 4) Sending those same loving feelings outward to different levels of recipients in a step-wise fashion to those further and further removed from yourself (e.g., family and friends, one’s community, all people, all beings).

In session three the loving-kindness meditation began in the same manner as above, but then shifted to directing loving-kindness to someone with whom the participant had difficulties, a standard variation of loving-kindness practice (Salzberg, 1995) that was also used in Carson et al’s (2005) study. Several other loving-kindness meditations were added which have never been used in a published study. During the in-vivo loving-kindness exercise, which was based on several sources (Gyatso, 2001;
Ladner, 2004), participants left the meditation room and walked outside under their own direction, while attempting to project loving kindness to whatever they encountered, whether people, animals, or nature in general. In the loving-kindness with visualized action plan meditation, participants were given an opportunity to decide if they would like more love and compassion in their lives, and then were encouraged to visualize a number of possibilities about how they might transfer the attitudes and principles of the course into their lives in the future.

Other novel elements of the intervention were the two psychoeducation sessions in which facilitators provided information in a psychoeducational format, allowing time for questions and discussion. In session two, the first psychoeducation session integrated information from medical and psychological studies (Ornish, 1998), quantum physics (Walker, 2000), psychoneuroimmunology (Ader, 2007), and transpersonal psychology (Wilber, 1995), and in lay terms presented a case that connecting or developing love, kindness, and compassion is natural, promotes positive affect and happiness, and is health-promoting. The second psychoeducation session used humorous examples of what might occur when one face the world with loving-kindness or “hateful meanness” to help participants identify with potential challenges and benefits of bringing attitudes and emotions of love, kindness, and compassion into their daily lives.

Facilitators included a physician, a licensed clinical social worker, and the first author, a post-internship doctoral candidate in clinical psychology. All facilitators were experienced practicing mindfulness and loving-kindness meditation with a mean
experience of ten years practice. The first author had completed an MBSR course at Stanford led by Mark Abramson, and had two years experience teaching mindfulness and loving-kindness meditation in groups and individual psychotherapy sessions. The social worker had never led loving-kindness meditations but had led Yoga Nidra groups that included mindfulness meditation for four years. The physician had never formally led meditations, but is an advanced meditator following many traditions, but mostly Vipassana, and is currently a consciousness researcher. Before the study began, the facilitators studied the manual and then practiced with each other to attempt to ensure adherence and competence. After the groups began, the facilitators met each week to discuss the group process and ensure that they were able to follow the manual. All sessions were audiotaped, and after the intervention, a random selection was checked for treatment quality as described by Waltz, Addis, Koerner, and Jacobson (1993). Two undergraduate research assistants independently rated a randomly selected sample of 50% of the audiotaped sessions to determine if facilitators adhered to the tasks as depicted in the manual. Facilitator behaviors were judged to adhere to the tasks within the manual on 96% of rated tasks.

**Control Group**

Participants did not know whether they were in the intervention or control group until after they signed the informed consent form and completed the initial surveys. After being told they were in the control group, the control participants were given a choice of three nights to return in one month’s time and fill out the post-intervention surveys. They
were also sent a reminder email encouraging them to attend the post-intervention meeting, and were mailed follow-up surveys in the same manner as the loving-kindness group.

**Measures**

Self-Compassion Scale. The Self-Compassion Scale (Neff, 2003) is a 26-item, five-point Likert measure of six different aspects of self-compassion: Self-Kindness (e.g., “I try to be understanding and patient toward aspects of my personality I don't like”), Self-Judgment (e.g., “I’m disapproving and judgmental about my own flaws and inadequacies”), Common Humanity (e.g., “I try to see my failings as part of the human condition”), Isolation (e.g., “When I think about my inadequacies it tends to make me feel more separate and cut off from the rest of the world”), Mindfulness (e.g., “When something painful happens I try to take a balanced view of the situation”), and Over-Identification (e.g., “When I’m feeling down I tend to obsess and fixate on everything that’s wrong.”). The Self-Compassion Scale has an appropriate factor structure and demonstrates concurrent validity (e.g., correlates with social connectedness), convergent validity (e.g., correlates with lower anxiety, depression, and perfectionism, and greater satisfaction with life), discriminate validity (e.g., no correlation with social desirability or narcissism, and appears to promote better coping than self-esteem) (Neff, Hsieh, & Dejitterat, 2005; Leary, Tate, Adams, Batts, & Hancock 2007; Neff, Rude, & Kirkpatrick, 2007), and test-retest reliability (α = .93, Neff, 2003) See Appendix A for the Self-Compassion Scale.
Compassionate Love Scale – Humanity Version. The Compassionate Love Scale (Sprecher & Fehr, 2005) is a 21-item, seven-point Likert measure of feelings, cognitions, and behaviors that are focused on caring, concern, tenderness, and an orientation toward supporting, helping, and understanding the other(s), particularly when the other(s) is (are) perceived to be suffering or in need. The scale has two versions, one which refers to close others including family and friends, and one which refers to strangers or humanity. The scale contains items which refer to the desire to alleviate suffering (e.g., “When I hear about someone (a stranger) going through a difficult time, I feel a great deal of compassion for him or her”), items which encompass wishing others well in good times or times without suffering (e.g., “I feel happy when I see that others (strangers) are happy”), and items which refer to global caring or kindness (e.g., “I very much wish to be kind and good to fellow human beings”). Cronbach’s alpha is .95 for each version of the scale. Compassionate love has been associated with empathy, helpfulness, volunteerism, and the provision of social support, and was more predictive of helping behavior than empathy (Sprecher & Fehr, 2005). See Appendix B for the Compassionate Love Scale-Humanity Version.

State-Trait Anxiety Inventory- Trait Form. The State Trait Anxiety Inventory - Trait Form (Spielberger, Gorsuch, & Lushene, 1970) is a 20-item, four-point Likert measure of relatively stable anxiety reactions. The validity and the reliability of the STAI have been extensively studied in the literature. Cronbach’s alpha for the Trait form was found to be .90 for men and .91 for women (Spielberger, 1983). The Trait form has
shown satisfactory test-retest reliability (.65 to .86) for intervals up to 3 months (Spielberger et al, 1970). The STAI correlates with other measures of anxiety such as the Taylor Manifest Anxiety Scale (r = .80), the IPAT Anxiety Scale (r = .75), and the Multiple Affect Adjective Check List (r = .52). See Appendix C for the State Trait Anxiety Inventory – Trait Form.

Weekly Meditation Check. This measure, designed specifically for this study, asked participants to list how much time they practiced both mindfulness and loving kindness meditations outside of the group meetings. Participants also rated how successful they were at bringing the attitudes, intentions, and principles discussed in the group into their daily lives. See Appendix D for the Weekly Meditation Check.

Post Intervention Survey. This measure, designed specifically for this study, is similar to post-intervention surveys used in several mindfulness studies (e.g., Shapiro, Astin, Bishop, & Cordova, 2005) used a five-point Likert scale to ask participants how well they were able to be mindful in their daily activities and how well they were able to bring attitudes of loving kindness to their daily activities. Participants were also asked to rate how meaningful the intervention was for their life on a 10 point scale. In open-ended questions participants were asked what they gained from the group and were given an opportunity to give feedback or suggestions. See Appendix E for the Post Intervention Survey.
RESULTS

Due to the repeated measures design, analyses were conducted on participants who completed measures at all three time points (pre, post, two month follow-up). Regression and chi-square analyses determined that there were no differences between the loving-kindness and control groups on the demographic variables of gender, religious background, or race. There were no significant differences on initial levels of the dependent variables between the loving-kindness and control groups. T-tests revealed that pre-intervention Compassionate Love scores for the fifty-six female participants (M = 100.90, SD = 14.90) were significantly higher than the scores for the fifteen male participants (M = 90.77, SD = 18.05), t(69) = 2.03, p < .05., which is consistent with other studies using this scale (Sprecher & Fehr, 2005; Sprecher & Fehr, 2006). In an interesting finding which has not been reported in the previous studies with the Compassionate Love Scale (Sprecher & Fehr, 2005; Sprecher & Fehr, 2006), t-tests revealed that pre-intervention Compassionate Love scores for the fifty-six Caucasian participants (M = 100.47, SD = 16.33) were significantly higher than scores for the eleven African-American participants (M = 89.5, SD = 10.76), t(65) = 2.59, p < .05. Scores for the three Hispanic participants (M = 85.50, SD = 4.95) were also lower than scores for Caucasians, but not significantly, t(57) = 3.48, p = .065., because of low power. The potential implication of lower Compassionate Love scores for minority members will be explored in the Discussion section. None of these differences in pre-intervention Compassionate Love scores predicted changes in post-intervention or two
month follow-up Compassionate Love Scores, so both African-Americans and Hispanics changed to a similar extent as Caucasians on Compassionate Love at post-intervention and two month follow-up. On the initial levels of Self-Compassion and trait anxiety, there were no differences by gender or race.

A doubly multivariate repeated measures MANOVA was performed to investigate differences between the loving-kindness and control conditions on Self-Compassion, Compassionate Love, and trait anxiety on the within subjects variable of time (pre, post, two month follow-up). Preliminary assumption testing was conducted to check for normality, linearity, univariate and multivariate outliers, homogeneity of variance-covariance matrices, and multicollinearity, with one violation noted. The error variance of Compassionate Love scores at pre-intervention was not equal across the two groups as indicated by Levene’s test, $F(1, 56) = 10.93$, $p < .002$. To compensate for this, the alpha level for univariate tests of changes in Compassionate Love was set at .025 (Fidell & Tabachnick, 2003).

Table 2 reveals that compared to the control group, the loving-kindness group experienced larger increases in Self-Compassion and Compassionate Love and larger decreases in trait anxiety. On the repeated measures MANOVA the interaction between time (pre, post, two month follow-up) and group (loving-kindness or control) on the three dependent variables (self-compassion, compassionate love, trait anxiety) was significant, $F(6, 51) = 2.98$, $p = .014$. 

Table 2.

Means and Standard Deviations for Study Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure/Group</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Loving-kindness</td>
<td>78.85</td>
<td>23.40</td>
<td>88.09</td>
<td>17.37</td>
<td>88.18</td>
<td>19.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>80.36</td>
<td>16.57</td>
<td>81.68</td>
<td>18.71</td>
<td>81.60</td>
<td>18.44</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loving-kindness</td>
<td>97.52</td>
<td>19.35</td>
<td>109.24</td>
<td>15.68</td>
<td>104.08</td>
<td>18.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>99.84</td>
<td>10.60</td>
<td>99.96</td>
<td>16.79</td>
<td>101.80</td>
<td>16.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trait Anxiety</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loving-kindness</td>
<td>41.79</td>
<td>11.69</td>
<td>36.82</td>
<td>9.56</td>
<td>35.76</td>
<td>8.73</td>
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<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>38.76</td>
<td>11.75</td>
<td>36.96</td>
<td>9.60</td>
<td>37.04</td>
<td>9.53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Planned contrasts revealed that for Self-Compassion there was a significant difference from pre-intervention to post-intervention between the two groups, F(1, 56) = 4.10, p < .05, and a significant difference for Self-Compassion from pre-intervention to two month follow-up between the two groups F(1, 56) = 5.85, p = .02.

Planned contrasts revealed that for Compassionate Love there was a significant difference from pre-intervention to post-intervention between the two groups, F(1, 56) = 9.46, p < .01, but there was not a significant difference for Compassionate Love from pre-intervention to two month follow-up between the two groups F(1, 56) = 1.42, p > .05.
Planned contrasts revealed that for trait anxiety there was not a significant difference from pre-intervention to post-intervention between the two groups, $F(1, 56) = 2.47, p > .05$, but there was a significant difference for trait anxiety from pre-intervention to two month follow-up between the two groups $F(1, 56) = 4.40, p < .05$.

Between group (treatment-control) and within-group (pre-intervention-post-intervention, pre-intervention-follow-up) effect sizes\(^1\) were calculated in the same manner as a previous meta-analysis of mindfulness studies (Grossman et al., 2004). The pre-intervention to post-intervention between group (loving-kindness versus control) effect sizes were .30 for Trait Anxiety, .45 for Self-Compassion, and .83 for Compassionate Love. The pre-intervention to two-month follow-up between group effect sizes were .42 for Trait Anxiety, .46 for Self-Compassion, and .33 for Compassionate Love. For the loving-kindness group, the within-group pre-intervention to post-intervention effect sizes were .47 for Trait Anxiety, .45 for Self-Compassion, and .67 for Compassionate Love. For the loving-kindness group the pre-intervention to two-month follow-up effect sizes were .66 for Trait Anxiety, .50 for Self-Compassion, and .38 for Compassionate Love. Effect sizes were also

Residualized change scores were created on the outcome variables of compassionate love, self-compassion, and trait anxiety to test if gender, age, race, or year in school influenced these change scores. Residualized change scores were created using regression

\(^1\) Cohen’s $d$ effect sizes were calculated using pooled standard deviations.
analysis to regress pre-intervention scores upon post-intervention scores and subsequently upon follow-up scores to create a pre-post residualized change score and a pre to follow-up residualized change score (Cohen & Cohen, 1983). Post-hoc regression tests using all participants revealed that gender, age, race, or year in school did not predict pre-post or pre-follow-up residualized change scores for Self-compassion, Compassionate Love, or trait anxiety.

Regression analyses also revealed that the facilitator the participants had did not predict residualized change scores on any of the outcome variables at either post-intervention or follow-up. Residualized change scores for each possible outcome variables were also compared for each possible therapist combination (therapist 1 versus 2, 1 versus 3, 2 versus 3), using independent samples t-tests, and none were significant.

Scores on the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Index were not different between the participants in the loving-kindness (M = 17.56, SD = 5.24) and control groups (M = 17.78, SD = 5.98), nor did social desirability scores predict pre-post or pre-follow-up residualized change scores on Self-Compassion, Compassionate Love, or trait anxiety.

The average reported amount of minutes per week spent practicing meditations outside of class was 37.35 (SD = 34.59) for mindfulness meditation and 28.36 (SD = 34.14) per for loving-kindness meditation. At two month follow-up the average reported amount of time spent practicing meditations was 13.22 (SD = 17.60) minutes per week for mindfulness meditation and 14.71 (SD = 28.83) minutes per week for loving-kindness.
meditation. Time spent meditating outside of the group did not predict changes on any of the outcome variables.

The average response to the question, “I was able to bring the attitudes, intentions, and principles discussed in the group to my daily life, whether meditating or not?” was 2.06 (SD = .40) at post-intervention and 2.07 (SD = .84) at two month follow-up, both of which correspond to “Agree” on the 1-5 Likert scale with 1 being “Strongly Agree”.

**DISCUSSION**

The current study compared a loving-kindness intervention to a non-intervention control group in a sample of college students, assessing them at three time points (pre, post, two month follow-up). At post-intervention, the loving-kindness group experienced significantly greater increases in Self-Compassion and Compassionate Love than the control group. At two month follow-up, the loving-kindness group continued to show significantly greater increases in Self-Compassion, but lost some of their gains in Compassionate Love, resulting in a non-significant change in Compassionate Love from pre-intervention to two month follow-up. While the loving-kindness group did not show a significantly greater reduction in trait anxiety than the control group from pre-intervention to post-intervention, they did show a significantly greater reduction in trait anxiety from pre-intervention to two month follow-up.

The current study was the first to test positive psychology outcomes of loving-kindness meditation as well as the first to test loving-kindness meditation with college students. It is promising that 33 of 36 college students completed the intervention, given
that the only published loving-kindness study (Carson et al, 2005) had significant dropouts in the loving-kindness group. This intervention can also be considered to be descended more from the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, with its intense emphasis on compassion practices, than the Vipassana tradition that informs MBSR, and thus expands research on interventions with origins in eastern meditative practices. Loving-kindness meditation is sometimes theorized to be a more advanced practice than mindfulness meditation (Trungpa, 1993), but there was no evidence in the current study that the participants, most of whom had no previous meditation experience, found it to be frustrating. The current study adds evidence to Carson et al’s (2005) study that people not engaged in a monastic lifestyle can benefit from loving-kindness practices in a short period of time. The medium effect sizes on self-compassion, compassionate love, and trait anxiety were similar to the effect sizes of .51 in the previous loving-kindness study (Carson et al, 2005) and the average effect sizes of .50 reported in a meta-analysis of mindfulness studies (Grossman et al., 2004), thus encouraging future research.

On the variable of trait anxiety, participants in the loving-kindness group experienced average effect sizes of .47 at post-intervention and .66 at two month follow-up. At post-intervention the control group showed an average decrease of two points on the trait anxiety scale, possibly contributing to the non-significant interaction between group and time. However, at two month follow-up the interaction between group and time on trait anxiety was significant. It is interesting to note that the loving-kindness intervention achieved a medium effect size for anxiety at follow-up while barely
mentioning anxiety within the intervention and also not directly attempting to modify anxious cognitions. Not directly challenging anxiety is consistent with other interventions that have been influenced by eastern psychology such as Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (Hayes, Strosahl, & Wilson, 2002), Dialectical Behavior Therapy (Koerner & Linehan, 2002), Relapse Prevention Therapy (Marlatt, 1994), Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy (Teasdale et al., 2000), and Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (Kabat-Zinn, 1990). These interventions have deemphasized directly challenging or reframing anxious and depressive thoughts in favor of observing, gaining perspective on, and accepting all mental activity. However, all of the above interventions also tell clients, either via the rationale or specific interventions, that the treatment and techniques will be reducing psychopathology, problematic mental states, or stress, whereas the current intervention focused almost entirely on building love, kindness, and compassion for oneself and the world. Future research can further examine the continuum of directly versus indirectly approaching anxiety and determine what combinations of modifying irrational thoughts (Beck & Weishaar, 2005), accepting these thoughts (e.g., Hayes et al., 2002), or directing one’s mind toward positive states such as love, kindness, and compassion, leads to the best resolution of anxiety or whether different people benefit from different combinations.

The loving-kindness intervention produced medium effect sizes on Self-Compassion and the gains were maintained at two month follow-up. Two studies using Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction for healthcare professionals showed significant
increases in Self-Compassion (Shapiro et al, 2005; Shapiro, Brown, & Biegel, 2007). It would be interesting to study if the current loving-kindness intervention, with a more direct focus on compassion toward the self can produce more self-compassion than mindfulness approaches, which focus on attending to one’s experience with openness and acceptance, but do not always attempt to directly send oneself kindness, love, and compassion.

Several interesting issues emerged surrounding the variable Compassionate Love. A post-hoc investigation revealed that at pre-intervention, African-Americans had significantly lower Compassionate Love for Humanity scores than Caucasians. Previous research with the Compassionate Love Scale reported higher scores for women on both the Compassionate Love for Close Others and Compassionate Love for Humanity versions of the scale but did not provide data about variations on these scales by race (Sprecher & Fehr, 2005; Sprecher & Fehr, 2006). Future studies might examine if the variations by race found on Compassionate Love for Humanity is a robust finding and whether variations by race exist on the Compassionate Love for Close Others version of the scale.

Within the loving-kindness group, Compassionate Love for Humanity scores dropped from post-intervention to two month follow-up while Self-Compassion scores remained elevated. One intriguing possibility is that it is easier to make and/or maintain gains in compassion for oneself than it is to become more compassionate for others.

Modern theories of evolution, kin selection, and reciprocal altruism (Dawkins, 1976;
Ridley, 1997; Trivers, 1985; Wright, 1994) posit that it is easier to direct compassion toward oneself than others, or at least direct compassion toward those who share one’s genes or can help one get one’s genes into future generations. Previous research has revealed that participants scored higher on the Compassionate Love for Close Others (M = 125.16, SD = 14.7) than on Compassionate Love for Humanity (M = 90.72, SD = 22.47) (Sprecher & Fehr, 2005), which is consistent with evolutionary theory (Trivers, 1985).

Thus, it is possible that maintaining gains in Compassionate Love for Humanity is more difficult than maintaining gains in Self-Compassion, simply because it is challenging to extend one’s compassion to all of humanity. This possibility also fits within the tenets of loving-kindness practice (Smith & Novak, 2004) as well as other spiritual traditions (Armstrong, 2006), which emphasize a constant need to cultivate and rekindle one’s ability to feel compassion for others. If humans really need to make a concerted effort to rise above the selfish nature of their genes (Dawkins, 1976) and reach out to others (Ridley, 1997), perhaps it is promising that a brief loving-kindness intervention boosted compassionate love scores. Future research can investigate whether it is easier to increase and/or maintain Self-Compassion, Compassionate Love for Close Others, or Compassionate Love for Humanity, as well as determine if gains can be enhanced and/or maintained.

Another interesting finding is that the amount of time spent meditating outside the loving-kindness group did not predict improvements on any of the outcome measures.
Participants reported practicing an average of 37.35 (SD = 34.59) minutes per week for mindfulness meditation and a mean of 28.36 (SD = 34.14) per week for loving-kindness meditation. This is considerably less than the average of 145.6 minutes per week (SD = 44.1) reported for Carson et al’s (2005) loving-kindness intervention and the average of 80 minutes per week reported in several Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction studies (Baer, 2003). The lower amount of weekly practice in the current study was anticipated as outside practice was not emphasized as strongly in the current intervention as in Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction. The current intervention suggested and encouraged meditation practice but did not ask for a commitment of 45 minutes per day/six days per week as Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction does.

In some mindfulness studies time spent meditating outside the group has predicted outcome gains and in others it has not (Baer, 2003; Shapiro, Carlson, & Astin, 2006). In the previous loving-kindness study (Carson et al, 2005) the amount of minutes practicing loving-kindness meditation on a given day predicted Daily Anger scores on the next day, but the average time participants spent meditating did not predict change on the pain or psychological symptom variables. It will remain for future research to delineate exactly how much meditation practice, both within and outside the group is necessary for change and to explore potential mechanisms and mediators. One possibility, which can be explored in future research, is whether for novice meditators attitudinal shifts can occur in a relatively short period of time, simply by being exposed to the ideas, values, and attitudes of a loving-kindness group, or via the provision of a deeply resonant emotional
experience of attempting to send compassion to oneself and others in an open, accepting, non-dogmatic, group environment. Part of the reason presented for boosting the percentage of time spent in loving-kindness meditation was anecdotal reports that participants find this practice to be emotionally moving and meaningful (Santorelli, 1999; Kabat-Zinn, 1990; 2005; Kristeller & Johnson, 2005).

**Limitations and Future Research**

This study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the results and planning future studies. Because the loving-kindness intervention was compared to an inactive control group, the observed effects might be due to nonspecific factors (e.g., participating in a structured meditation group with a coherent rationale, developing an alliance with the facilitator, developing hope or belief in the treatment) (Frank & Frank, 1991). Future studies can compare loving-kindness interventions to active interventions such as a mindfulness group, a pure relaxation group, or a psychoeducation group about the drawbacks of hostility and benefits of love.

Participants could have been influenced by demand characteristics. The intended hypotheses of higher self-compassion and compassionate love and lower anxiety could easily have been ascertained by the participants. However, the intervention certainly placed more of an emphasis on cultivating compassion for self and others than on reducing anxiety, and effect sizes within the loving kindness group revealed that these variables changed to a similar extent. Future studies might measure kindness, compassion, love, or anxious responses using physiological measures. Participants might be brought into a laboratory and then deliberately annoyed,
possibly outside of the supposed purpose of the assessment, to determine if they react with hostility or kindness, compassion, or forgiveness, which could be behaviorally or physiologically measured.

Because of the multicomponent nature of the intervention, it is difficult to determine which specific components, if any, led to improvements. Likewise, although this study wanted to increase the percentage of time spent in loving-kindness meditations as compared to MBSR, it was not a component or dismantling study of MBSR. Thus, simply because this study achieved some results does not mean that the results are superior to MBSR or that the percentage of time dedicated to loving-kindness within MBSR should be increased.

The mindfulness arena has seen the recent creation of four mindfulness scales (Baer, Smith, & Allen, 2004; Brown & Ryan, 2003; Buchheld, Grossman, & Walach, 2001; Lau et al., 2006) designed to determine if mindfulness interventions increase mindfulness and if mindfulness is a mechanism or mediator of change (Shapiro et al., 2006). The loving-kindness field will also need to determine mechanisms and mediators of change. The loving-kindness field can start by borrowing these mindfulness scales, as loving-kindness might also boost mindfulness, but then could develop measures of potential mechanisms that fit the theory of loving-kindness such as love, compassion, or forgiveness. Although self-compassion and compassionate love were used as outcome measures in this study it is possible that they could also be mediators of other changes. For example, self-compassion could be measured at several points to determine if it mediated other changes (e.g., reduced back pain in Carson et al 2005).
It is unknown to what extent the results of the current loving-kindness intervention generalize to samples with other characteristics. The sample saw a description of the study on the web based experiment management system before signing up to be randomized into either group and was thus open to the idea of a loving-kindness intervention. The sample consisted of undergraduates in their first few years of college (mean age = 19.1), and thus it is not clear how the intervention would work with other demographic groups. No restrictive inclusion criteria were used. Thus, it is not clear if the intervention would be more or less effective if selecting for high anxiety, low self-compassion, or low compassionate love.

Self-Compassion (Neff, 2003) and Compassionate Love (Sprecher & Fehr, 2005) are relatively new scales, and the correlates and significance of changes on these scales are still being explored. Future loving-kindness research can attempt to replicate gains in self-compassion and possibly monitor changes in self-compassion throughout a study to determine if gains in self-compassion lead to better coping, affect regulation, or academic performance. Although Compassionate Love has been correlated with a variety of positive outcomes, it has not been used in outcome studies. Future research can attempt to replicate, increase, and maintain gains in Compassionate Love and then determine if Compassionate Love is related to other benefits such as increased forgiveness, perceived social support or altruism, or reductions in cynicism, hostility, and loneliness. Research could also examine if compassionate love provides some of the health benefits that have been associated with these research areas (Ornish, 1998). Health benefits could be
measured with immune markers such as salivary immunoglobulin A (McClelland & Kirshnit, 1989) or by counting the number of visits to the student health center over a year.

Another interesting line of research would be to examine the effects of a loving-kindness intervention on the family and/or friends of the participants. This would be valuable both in terms of gaining data from multiple rater perspectives on whether participants’ love, kindness, or compassion increased, but also to see if friends and family, the potential recipients of increases in love, kindness, and compassion, might benefit from these increases. Research might examine whether a loving-kindness intervention for parents might benefit their children. A year-long loving-kindness course might be encouraged among first-year college students, so that after four years, a large part of the campus had been taught the attitudes and emotions of loving-kindness. It would be interesting to examine if there might be some synergistic benefit of being around more people who are practicing loving-kindness meditation or whether it might even be possible to detect changes, possibly in happiness, life satisfaction or self-compassion, in people who had not even participated in the intervention. Hopefully, the current study can be a step toward some of this future research by demonstrating that loving-kindness meditation holds promise as the focus of an intervention.
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APPENDIX A: SELF-COMPASSION SCALE

Please read each statement carefully before answering. To the left of each item, indicate how often you behave in the stated manner, using the following scale:

Almost never | Almost always
1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5

1. I’m disapproving and judgmental about my own flaws and inadequacies.

2. When I’m feeling down I tend to obsess and fixate on everything that’s wrong.

3. When things are going badly for me, I see the difficulties as part of life that everyone goes through.

4. When I think about my inadequacies, it tends to make me feel more separate and cut off from the rest of the world.

5. I try to be loving towards myself when I’m feeling emotional pain.

6. When I fail at something important to me I become consumed by feelings of inadequacy.

7. When I’m down, I remind myself that there are lots of other people in the world feeling like I am.

8. When times are really difficult, I tend to be tough on myself.

9. When something upsets me I try to keep my emotions in balance.

10. When I feel inadequate in some way, I try to remind myself that feelings of inadequacy are shared by most people.

11. I’m intolerant and impatient towards those aspects of my personality I don't like.

12. When I’m going through a very hard time, I give myself the caring and tenderness I need.

13. When I’m feeling down, I tend to feel like most other people are probably happier than I am.
14. When something painful happens I try to take a balanced view of the situation.

15. I try to see my failings as part of the human condition.

16. When I see aspects of myself that I don’t like, I get down on myself.

17. When I fail at something important to me I try to keep things in perspective.

18. When I’m really struggling, I tend to feel like other people must be having an easier time of it.

19. I’m kind to myself when I’m experiencing suffering.

20. When something upsets me I get carried away with my feelings.

21. I can be a bit cold-hearted towards myself when I'm experiencing suffering.

22. When I'm feeling down I try to approach my feelings with curiosity and openness.

23. I’m tolerant of my own flaws and inadequacies.

24. When something painful happens I tend to blow the incident out of proportion.

25. When I fail at something that's important to me, I tend to feel alone in my failure.

26. I try to be understanding and patient towards those aspects of my personality I don't like.
APPENDIX B: COMPASSIONATE LOVE SCALE – HUMANITY VERSION

Items are answered on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not at all true of me) to 7 (very true of me).

1. When I see people I do not know feeling sad, I feel a need to reach out to them.

2. I spend a lot of time concerned about the well-being of humankind.

3. When I hear about someone (a stranger) going through a difficult time, I feel a great deal of compassion for him or her.

4. It is easy for me to feel the pain (and joy) experienced by others, even though I do not know them.

5. If I encounter a stranger who needs help, I would do almost anything I could to help him or her.

6. I feel considerable compassionate love for people from everywhere.

7. I would rather suffer myself than see someone else (a stranger) suffer.

8. If given the opportunity, I am willing to sacrifice in order to let people from other places who are less fortunate achieve their goals.

9. I tend to feel compassion for people, even though I do not know them.

10. One of the activities that provides me with the most meaning to my life is helping others in the world when they need help.

11. I would rather engage in actions that help others, even though they are strangers, than engage in actions that would help me.

12. I often have tender feelings toward people (strangers) when they seem to be in need.

13. I feel a selfless caring for most of humankind

14. I accept others whom I do not know even when they do things I think are wrong.

15. If a person (a stranger) is troubled, I usually feel extreme tenderness and caring.

16. I try to understand rather than judge people who are strangers to me.
17. I try to put myself in a stranger’s shoes when he or she is in trouble.

18. I feel happy when I see that others (strangers) are happy.

19. Those whom I encounter through my work and public life can assume that I will be there if they need me.

20. I want to spend time with people I don’t know well so that I can find ways to help enrich their lives.

21. I very much wish to be kind and good to fellow human beings.
APPENDIX C: STATE TRAIT ANXIETY INVENTORY- TRAIT FORM

Directions: A number of statements which people have used to describe themselves are given below. Read each statement and then circle the appropriate number to the right of the statement to indicate how you feel generally, over the last week. There are no right or wrong answers. Do not spend too much time on any one statement but give the answer which seems to describe your present feelings best.

Not at all Somewhat Moderately so Very much so
1 2 3 4

Circle your response

1. I feel pleasant................................................................. 1 2 3 4
2. I feel nervous and restless............................................. 1 2 3 4
3. I feel satisfied with myself............................................. 1 2 3 4
4. I wish I could be as happy as others seem to be............ 1 2 3 4
5. I feel like a failure........................................................... 1 2 3 4
6. I feel rested......................................................................... 1 2 3 4
7. I am “calm, cool, and collected”................................. 1 2 3 4
8. I feel that difficulties are piling up so that I cannot overcome them.... 1 2 3 4
9. I worry too much over something that really doesn’t matter........... 1 2 3 4
10. I am happy....................................................................... 1 2 3 4
11. I have disturbing thoughts............................................ 1 2 3 4
12. I lack self-confidence..................................................... 1 2 3 4
13. I feel secure..................................................................... 1 2 3 4
14. I make decisions easily................................................. 1 2 3 4
15. I feel inadequate.............................................................. 1 2 3 4
16. I am content................................................................... 1 2 3 4
17. Some unimportant thought runs through my mind and bothers me.... 1 2 3 4
18. I take disappointments so keenly that I can’t put them out of my mind.... 1 2 3 4
19. I am a steady person. ................................................................. 1  2  3  4
20. I get in a state of tension or turmoil as I think over
    my recent concerns and interests ............................................ 1  2  3  4
APPENDIX D: MARLOW CROWNE SOCIAL DESIRABILITY INDEX

Listed below are a number of statements concerning personal attitudes and traits. Read each item and decide whether the statement is True or False as it pertains to you personally. Mark T or F to the left of the number of the question.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1. Before voting I thoroughly investigate the qualifications of all the candidates.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. I never hesitate to go out of my way to help someone in trouble.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. It is sometimes hard for me to go on with my work, if I am not encouraged.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. I have never intensely disliked anyone.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. On occasion I have had doubts about my ability to succeed in life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. I sometimes feel resentful when I don't get my way.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7. I am always careful about my manner of dress.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8. My table manners at home are as good as when I eat out in a restaurant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9. If I could get into a movie without paying and be sure I was not seen, I would probably do it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10. On a few occasions, I have given up doing something because I thought too little of my ability.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11. I like to gossip at times.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12. There have been times when I felt like rebelling against people in authority even though I knew they were right.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13. No matter who I'm talking to, I'm always a good listener.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14. I can remember &quot;playing sick&quot; to get out of something.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15. There have been occasions when I took advantage of someone.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16. I'm always willing to admit it when I make a mistake.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
17. I always try to practice what I preach.

18. I don't find it particularly difficult to get along with loud-mouthed, obnoxious people.

19. I sometimes try to get even rather than forgive and forget.

20. When I don't know something I don't at all mind admitting it.

21. I am always courteous, even to people who are disagreeable.

22. At times I have really insisted on having things my own way.

23. There have been occasions when I felt like smashing things.

24. I would never think of letting someone else be punished for my wrongdoings.

25. I never resent being asked to return a favor.

26. I have never been irked when people expressed ideas very different from my own.

27. I never make a long trip without checking the safety of my car.

28. There have been times when I was quite jealous of the good fortune of others.

29. I have almost never felt the urge to tell someone off.

30. I am sometimes irritated by people who ask favors of me.

31. I have never felt that I was punished without cause.

32. I sometimes think when people have a misfortune they only got what they deserved.

33. I have never deliberately said something that hurt someone's feelings.
APPENDIX E: WEEKLY MEDITATION CHECK

Please write down how much time you spent this week practicing formal meditations outside of class _______.

Please circle the appropriate number that expresses your agreement with the statement below.

I was able to bring the attitudes, intentions, and principles discussed in the group to your daily life, whether meditating or not?

1 2 3 4 5
Strongly Agree Undecided Disagree Strongly Disagree
Agree

**APPENDIX F: POST-INTERVENTION SURVEY**

Please circle the number which corresponds to how much you agree or disagree with the following statements.

1. I was able to be mindful (present, in the moment, aware) in my daily activities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. I was able to bring attitudes of loving kindness (kindness, compassion, love, acceptance) to my daily activities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On a scale from 1-10, how meaningful was the loving kindness intervention been in your life?

   ________

What do you feel you gained from the group?

Use the space below and on the back to give any other feedback or suggestions for the course.
APPENDIX G: LOVING-KINDNESS INTERVENTION MANUAL

This section will present the details of the loving-kindness intervention. The course is an integration of Carson et al’s (2005) loving-kindness intervention for chronic back pain, components of MBSR (Kabat-Zinn, 1990), exercises from several books on compassion and happiness (Ladner, 2004; Gyatso & Cutler, 1998; Gyatso, 2001), bibliotherapy (Kabat-Zinn, 1990; Ornish, 1998), psychoeducation about the health benefits of connectedness, compassion, social support, and altruism, and homework assignments using audio recordings of guided meditations. Below is an overview of the four sessions followed by detailed descriptions of each session. The origins and citations for each exercise, as well as detailed scripts of the major activities within the intervention are provided. All of the scripts and many of the descriptions of exercises use a first person voice from the facilitator’s perspective. This is done so that the reader can understand the full context of the intervention, in terms of language, tone, attitudes, and intentions. As was described in the previous section on MBSR, some researchers (Baer, 2003; Bishop, 2002; Brazier, 1997; Dimidjian & Linehan, 2003) are concerned the medical establishment may manualize and medicalize mindfulness interventions, essentially treating them as the next progressive muscle relaxation, without fully understanding their traditional context or fully exploring their ability to deliver positive benefits or testing positive mechanisms. The first person facilitator scripts should help the reader understand some of the rich context of mindfulness and loving-kindness interventions and see that at least in terms of language and tone, the proposed
intervention is different than other western stress management approaches. The scripts will serve as a training manual and guide for the facilitators, and they will be expected to follow the overall structure and intent in the exercises, but by no means are they expected to read the scripts out loud or memorize them verbatim.

**Overview of All Sessions of the Loving-kindness Intervention**

**Session 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Minutes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strawberry Exercise with Connectedness</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overview of Intervention</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction to Mindfulness Exercise</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mindfulness Exercise</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Processing &amp; Discussion</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Break</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction to Loving-kindness Exercise</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loving-kindness Exercise</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Processing &amp; Discussion</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary &amp; Preview</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total minutes</strong></td>
<td><strong>82</strong></td>
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</table>

**Session 2**

<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Check-in</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mindfulness Exercise</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Processing &amp; Discussion</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Break</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychoeducation: Benefits of Connectedness</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loving-kindness Exercise</td>
<td>20</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Session 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Minutes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Check-in</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction to Loving-kindness with Person with Whom One Has Difficulties</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loving-kindness Exercise with Person with Whom One Has Difficulties</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Processing &amp; Discussion</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychoeducation: Transferring Loving-kindness to Daily Life</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Break</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction to In Vivo Loving-kindness</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Vivo Loving-kindness Exercise</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Processing &amp; Discussion</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Summary &amp; Preview</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total minutes</td>
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</table>

Session 4

<table>
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<tr>
<td>Loving-kindness Exercise</td>
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<tr>
<td>Processing &amp; Discussion</td>
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<tr>
<td>Group Discussion of Intervention Thus Far</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Break</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction to Loving-kindness with Visualized Action Plan</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loving-kindness with Visualized Action</td>
<td>20</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Detailed Descriptions of Each Session

Session 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Minutes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strawberry Exercise with Connectedness</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overview of Intervention</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction to Mindfulness Exercise</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mindfulness Exercise</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Processing &amp; Discussion</td>
<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Break</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Introduction to Loving-kindness Exercise</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Loving-kindness Exercise</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Processing &amp; Discussion</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary &amp; Preview</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total minutes</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Strawberry Exercise with Connectedness Focus

Origins of the Exercise and Modifications

This exercise is modeled after the strawberry exercise which begins MBSR (Kabat-Zinn, 1990). The only modification is that the facilitator spends slightly more time emphasizing how the strawberry can symbolize connectedness. In the Kabat-Zinn model the vast majority of the time, perhaps 95% is spent mindfully experiencing the strawberry, while approximately 5% is spent focusing on how the strawberry symbolizes
connectedness. The proposed intervention will also focus on mindfully savoring the strawberry, but will boost the amount of time spent pondering connectedness to approximately 40% of the exercise.

**Description of the Exercise.**

The instructor passes out strawberries and then teaches the participants how to eat them mindfully. This helps the class to see that mindfulness is not some esoteric practice, but something quite quotidian, that nevertheless has significant power to help them become more present, and thus better caretakers of themselves (Kabat-Zinn, 1990). The facilitator will guide the participants in slowly bringing their full attention and awareness to eating each strawberry. They will be encouraged to approach the strawberry with a “beginner’s mind” (Kabat-Zinn, 1990), which entails approaching the strawberry as if one had never seen a strawberry before and fully attending to the experience of eating the strawberry in this moment. The main modification from Kabat-Zinn’s strawberry exercise will be that there will be more of a focus on pondering how the strawberry symbolizes each individuals’ connectedness to other life forms. The facilitator will ask the participants to ponder that this strawberry was once a grape which was growing on a plant nourished by the soil which is linked to the entire earth, fed by rain and sunshine, maintained and picked by other people, and then packaged, brought to market, and sold by other people. Participants are asked to consider the myriad people and processes involved in bringing this strawberry to them. This helps the practitioner realize that they
are supported by and connected to others and nature in myriad ways which usually are outside consciousness.

**Facilitator Script.**

“Take three strawberries and place them in your hand. Do not eat them yet. In a moment it will become clear what we are doing. Place one of the strawberries in the palm of one of your hands. Now bring all of your attention to looking at the strawberry. Look at the strawberry as if you have never seen one before. Perhaps you are a child eating a strawberry for the first time, or perhaps you are from a country that does not have strawberries. Or if you have a vivid imagination, perhaps you are a visitor from another planet studying your first specimen of human food. Drop any concepts you have about this thing before you which we call a strawberry and just perceive it.

You may notice slight variations in its color. You may notice that the light reflects differently off certain parts of the strawberry. Notice dozens of seeds, indentations, and ridges on its surface. Now touch the strawberry. Use your finger to feel the edges of the strawberry. Does it feel rough or smooth? Just bring a spirit of inquiry to the experience. And now we will smell the strawberry.

Bring it up to your nose and notice if there is any particular smell.

Now we will begin the process of eating the strawberry. Slowly raise it to your mouth. Notice the process of opening your mouth. Notice how it grazes your lips. Place it in your mouth. Notice the sensations of having the weight of the strawberry in your mouth. How does it feel? You may want to close your eyes to bring full attention to the
process of tasting. Notice how your mouth knows what to do. Your mouth begins producing saliva. Notice how your tongue knows how to adjust to and move the strawberry. Observe how your tongue skillfully positions the strawberry between your teeth. Now take a bite. Notice the feeling of biting the strawberry. Feel the juices of the strawberry enter your mouth. Slowly chew the strawberry and notice the varying flavors.

When you bite down, do you hear the sound of chewing? Attend to the sound.

When you’re ready, swallow some of the strawberry. Feel the sensation of it moving down your throat. Are there lingering flavors in your mouth?

And now that we have eaten one strawberry, let’s pause for a moment before eating our second strawberry and consider where the strawberry came from. The strawberry was once connected to a living and growing plant. The plant was nourished by the soil and thus was connected to the very earth that lies below us right now. It was fed by rain and nourished by sunlight. Thus, these strawberries sitting on your hand right now were created by the processes of nature which sustain us. In fact, ponder for a moment that plants feed on carbon-dioxide, which is the result of your every exhalation. So in theory these strawberries were fed by you or other people.

Dozens of people were involved in the planting, nurturing, harvest, and production of this strawberry before you. Field workers gently picked the strawberry off the plant. Production workers packaged the strawberries. Truck drivers delivered them to a local store. And store workers placed the strawberries in the store and sold them to me, who delivered them here to you. When we consider all of the people involved in bringing
these strawberries to us, the number of people quickly rises to dozens. In this manner we can realize that there are many connections between people and things in our daily lives to which we may not always attend.

And now let’s eat our second strawberry in the same manner in which we ate the first. Bring your full attention to every sensation involved in eating the strawberry. You can also allow your mind to focus on the connectedness inherent in the strawberry. As you enjoy the strawberry you might extend gratitude to any of the people or natural processes involved in bringing this strawberry to you.”

At the end of the exercise the facilitator will make a few comments about how the strawberry exercise is a metaphor and a preview of what is to come. The facilitator continues, “The two basic themes of the entire four week group were contained in the strawberry exercise. First we focused on mindfully eating the strawberries. Mindfulness has been defined as paying attention in the present moment in a non-judging and accepting manner. The part of the exercise in which we focused on the connectedness represented by the strawberries is similar to the loving-kindness exercises we will soon be doing. In the loving-kindness exercise, we will ponder our connectedness to the world and how we share many basic qualities with other people, such as wishing to be free from suffering. Then we will go one step further to generate feelings of love, kindness, acceptance, and compassion for ourselves and the world.”
Overview of Intervention

Facilitator Script

“In the upcoming weeks we will engage in mindfulness and loving-kindness meditations as well as discussions about how these meditations feel for you, and discussions about topics related to the meditations, such as the value of connecting with ourselves and connecting with others. Mindfulness has been defined as the awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally to the unfolding of experience moment by moment (Kabat-Zinn, 2005). We practice mindfulness by paying attention to different “objects of awareness” openly and non-judgmentally. Objects of awareness can include sensations in and around our belly during while breathing, the breath as it moves past the tip of the nose, the entire path of the breath from the tip of nose to filling the entire lungs, individual parts of the body, the body as a whole, sounds or the process of hearing, the process of walking, or emotions. We will talk more about how to do these meditations immediately before we do them.

Loving-kindness meditation involves attempting to generate feelings of kindness, acceptance, and compassion first for ourselves and then slowly and gradually trying to cultivate these same feelings for a series of others. We start by generating compassion for those close to us, such as loved ones, and then gradually move to generating compassion for people further removed from us, finally reaching all beings, meaning all life forms on earth. It is challenging, but don’t worry, we’ll lead you through it slowly. And it can be fun.”
If we had to boil the purpose of this group down, it’s really about connecting with ourselves and connecting with the world. Basically, we’re remembering, realizing, and enhancing connectedness. What is connectedness? Just as it sounds, connectedness is a state of being connected, in contact with, in touch with. Connectedness is also related to terms such as support, cooperation, and love.

In mindfulness, we reconnect with ourselves. We take time out, pause, sit, and attend to our bodies and minds, opening to every aspect of our experience in this moment. In loving-kindness we reconnect with ourselves by recognizing our need for love, kindness, and compassion. We then attempt to provide these for ourselves, which can actually be quite challenging. Then we reconnect with the world by recognizing that all people also want love, kindness, and compassion. Just as we do, they wish to be free from suffering and to experience contentment. By projecting love and kindness outward, we are also being kind to ourselves. Sending love, compassion, and kindness outward may give us a break from worry and may lessen feelings of separation and isolation.

There are many reasons for connecting or reconnecting, and we’ll get further into them in the upcoming weeks. But just to give you a preview, we reconnect because it’s natural. We’re already connected at many levels. Mind/body medicine is increasingly revealing complex linkages between our minds and all the various systems in our bodies. In addition, fields such as quantum physics and systems theories are showing that we connect to others at multiple levels. A second reason is that it feels good to connect. Research has shown that by bringing mindfulness to an activity, such as eating, we enjoy
it more. Connecting with others, via service or altruism has also been shown to lead to positive moods. And a third reason is that it is good for us. By connecting with ourselves, we may be able to attend to complex feedback loops within our bodies that regulate our health, and by connecting with others we may be able to tap into powerful health effects associated with social support, altruism, finding meaning, and spirituality. All of these forms of connecting with others have been linked to better physical and psychological health.”

**Introduction to Mindfulness**

**Origins of the Exercise and Modifications**

The mindfulness exercises are modeled after various works by Kabat-Zinn (1990; 1995; 2005).

**Description of the introduction**

The facilitator introduces diaphragmatic breathing, which will be a major focus of mindfulness exercises and will also be used at the beginning of all loving-kindness exercises. Subsequent mindfulness sessions will only include the instruction to return awareness to the breath, without a technical explanation of diaphragmatic breathing.

The facilitator points out the difference between shallow or chest breathing and diaphragmatic breathing, in which the body is allowed to relax, and the belly allowed to move. Participants are taught that consciously attending to the breath, a process that is normally unconscious, is a way to reconnect the mind and body. Participants are taught
that the breath is a home base, which is always present, and can always be returned to, no matter the situation. They are taught that attending to the breath is incredibly simple in concept yet often difficult in practice, so difficult that many long-time practitioners have dedicated much of their lives to learning to be present with it. Then participants are asked to attend to their diaphragmatic breathing, which is called the “breath at the belly”, with the same sense of inquiry, openness, and connectedness that was applied to eating the strawberries. They are also taught that belly breathing involves letting go, allowing, or non-doing. Thus, one does not force the body to breathe at the belly. One relaxes and then observes how the body knows how to breathe, and prefers to breathe from the belly when relaxed. Because it is the first time that they are formally performing a sitting meditation, participants are only asked to pay attention to the breath for ten minutes.

**Facilitator Script**

“Mindfulness involves paying attention to the present moment with a non-judgmental and accepting awareness. It involves an open-hearted curiosity into what is going on for us now, here, in the present. It can help us reconnect with all aspects of ourselves, which can improve self-understanding and help us make wise choices. By learning to attend to life in the present we can interrupt habitual cycles of worry, fear, and self-criticism, while coming to appreciate the simple pleasures of this life. The act of attending to our experience in an accepting and non-judgmental manner could also be thought of as an act of kindness or compassion toward ourselves. We attend to ourselves,
listen to ourselves, and pay attention to our experience, right here, now, in this moment, without getting caught up in self-evaluative processes about how we are doing.

To cultivate mindfulness we will practice observing different objects of awareness. First we will focus on different aspects of the breath: the rising and falling of the belly, the beginning of the breath at the tip of the nose, and the entire path of the breath. Then we will focus on our bodies, attending to whatever sensations are there: whether relaxation, sensations of pressure from floor, the sensation of clothes or air on our skin, or even feelings of discomfort or pain. We will open to whatever is there, even if in our normal frame of mind, we would label the experience unpleasant and wish to change it or push it away.

Inevitably you will find that your mind has drifted away from our current object of awareness. The essence of this practice is to notice when this has occurred, and then gently invite the mind back to what we are attending to now. Just noticing the nature of the mind, learning how it operates, and then realizing that with practice you can redirect it where you want can be a powerful discovery that benefits your life and motivates you to continue this type of practice. Also remember to be kind with yourself as you embark upon this task of beginning a meditation practice. It can be very difficult, so give yourself a break and realize that if you attempt the practice, you’re doing it. We’re not interested in rankings, grades, or evaluations about how you’re doing it. Your ability to mindfully attend to the moment will always shift, even if you do these practices for years, just as every aspect of life inevitably shifts.”
Mindfulness Exercise

Facilitator Script

“To begin, assume a comfortable, but not slouching posture on the floor or in a chair that will allow you to breathe fully. This posture has been called ‘sitting with dignity.’ Or lie on a mat, finding a comfortable position on the floor. I will start the exercise with two rings of a chime and end it with three rings.

Allow yourself to settle in and come fully to this place and this moment.

Now let’s begin by attending to our breathing. First we will observe the breath at the belly. As we relax, we begin to breathe from the belly. The belly rises on the inbreath and falls on the outbreath. Place your mind on the belly and feel the sensations. One long-time meditator once said that ‘no two breaths are the same.’ This means that if we pay close attention we may notice slight differences in our breathing: in the depth, speed, fluidity, or the amount of air. Such a simple thing as breathing can become highly interesting if we just pay attention.

Stay with the breath.

Inbreath, outbreath.

Rising, falling.

It may help you to place one of these gentle labels on parts of the breathing process: saying to yourself, rising, falling, or in, out, whatever works. This is sometimes called noting.

Just see if you can attend for one breath,
and then another,
and another.

Just this breath,
and then the next breath.

Just this moment, and then the next.

If at any point you notice that your mind has drifted into thoughts, memories from the past, concerns about the future, or possibly even evaluative thoughts about what we’re doing right now just notice or make a note that your mind has drifted into a pattern that it is very used to. You might say, “ah mind, you’ve been drifting again, but right now, we’re attending to breath, please come back with me.” And you return.

Return 1,000 times if necessary. This is the practice.

For the last part of this exercise, just continue focusing on the breath in silence. In two minutes I will ring the chime to end the exercise.

*Processing and Discussion*

*Description of Processing and Discussion.*

The facilitator reminds the participants that after every exercise there will be an opportunity for processing, feedback, or questions. After discussing any questions, the facilitator asks if anyone had any thoughts during the mindfulness exercise, and if these thoughts drew their attention off of the breath. Inevitably, most people will identify with the experience of their minds wandering into thinking about the past or future while they were intending to focus on the breath. The facilitator uses humor and levity to point out
the universality of this situation. The facilitator might say, “isn’t it interesting that our minds have a mind of their own?” The facilitator might use a metaphorical story, such as the story described below that was adapted from Easwaran (1993).

**Facilitator Script.**

“Imagine that you get in your car for a road trip from Athens to California that you’ve been planning for months. You set out on the road, eager for all the pleasures ahead with your westerly route fully planned. However, after a few miles your car takes an exit you did not intend to take and begins heading south toward Arkansas. Before you even notice you find yourself crossing the Arkansas state line.”

The facilitator then asks, “Have any of your cars ever done that?” The participants likely say no. Then the facilitator will say, “Of course not. It’s preposterous. We control our cars. Do we not? It is rather easy. Then why can we often not direct our brains or minds? Or even bring awareness to what our minds are doing? Or why they are doing it? Here we are, supposedly, the most advanced species on earth (personally, I prefer dolphins), and we cannot steer our minds as we steer our cars. It’s a powerful and surprising discovery. Despite the fact that our minds reside within our bodies, we are not always steering the vehicle of our mind. You try to stay on the breath and your mind drifts into memories, regrets, fantasies, anxieties about upcoming deadlines, evaluations of how you are performing right now, or a million other tangential thoughts. Just recognizing that our minds often have a mind of their own is a powerful realization that comes from practicing mindfulness. We may have noticed that our mind bounced around
before, but it is not until we attempt to sit in a formal meditation and focus only on the breath that we fully appreciate the nature of our mind.

So the first step is to realize the nature of the mind. Then, we can begin to relate to our thoughts differently. When you notice that your mind has drifted off of your current object of awareness, simply note that you have drifted into thinking. If you wish you can silently use a “gentle label” such as “thinking” to note your thinking. Later as you become more familiar with your mental scripts you might apply other gentle labels such as “fantasy, inner critic, or ruminating mind” to denote that you are noticing your thinking with as much awareness as you can, and recognizing and accepting it as just thinking without excessive involvement or judgments, and then choosing to return to your object of awareness.”

*Introduction to Loving-kindness Meditation*

*Origins of the Exercise and Modifications.*

The loving-kindness exercises in this intervention are modeled after exercises by Kabat-Zinn (2005), Carson (2005), Salzberg (1995), and the Dalai Lama (1998; 2001). The current author synthesized these descriptions and wrote his own phrases based on his experiences teaching these practices to college students.

*Facilitator Script.*

“Loving-kindness meditation has been practiced for thousands of years, and has parallels in many cultures throughout the world. Loving-kindness meditation is a practice
designed to boost feelings of compassion for ourselves and others in order to promote our well-being. This practice can help us cope with anger and other negative emotions. It can also fill us with positive emotions such as empathy, compassion, and happiness which may facilitate our relationships with others as well as have an impact on our health. Loving-kindness meditation is currently being applied in healthcare settings to address a variety of physical and psychological issues, and is being used outside of healthcare settings to promote happiness, compassion, and personal growth.

The practice will start with a short period of focusing on the breath and coming to be fully present with our experience in this moment. This part is exactly the same as the mindfulness exercise. From this point we will begin to attempt to cultivate feelings of compassion for ourselves. We will first do this by visualizing the person in our lives who has loved us most completely. We can visualize the person in the room with us, and also recall what it was like to bask in their love. We imagine them looking down on us with an expression of pure love and acceptance. We can imagine receiving these feelings in this moment. If you do not have a person in mind, you can simply imagine what it would be like to receive complete acceptance and love from a person. Then after we imagine basking in the love and compassion of the other, we will gradually let the other loving person fade, and attempt to generate these feelings for ourselves. Sometimes people have difficulty sending themselves kindness, as they may have been taught that focusing on the themselves is selfish and that they should spend all their energy caring for others. However, within this practice, we emphasize the connectedness between self and others.
Therefore, we realize that in being kind to ourselves we prepare ourselves to be kind to others, and vice versa, we realize that in being kind to others, we are most kind to ourselves (Franklin, 1786).” So if you are not accustomed to sending kind feelings to yourself, see if you can make a sincere effort during the exercise.

After we spend several minutes sending feelings of compassion toward ourselves and observing how it feels, we will begin to send the same kindness, love, and acceptance to others. First we will send love and kindness to those close to us, and then gradually expand outwards to those further from us. This can be thought of as expanding our circle or span of compassion. We will begin by attempting to generate feelings of compassion for a loved one. It could be the loved one who we first envisioned sending us compassion. We attempt to generate the same feelings of kindness, compassion, acceptance, and love for them. Gradually we will expand the circle of compassion outward to include friends and family, people we live with, our community, our nation, all the world’s people, and finally all living beings.

As with mindfulness, we practice loving-kindness with attitudes of acceptance, non-judgment, non-striving, patience, letting go, and compassion. Thus, please be compassionate about your efforts to generate compassion (said with emphasis and inflection to denote irony, humor, and importance). In other words do not judge yourself if you are not immediately generating powerful feelings of compassion. This is a difficult practice. With practice, you may be able to generate more vivid images and feelings of compassion. This is not a competition, and in fact we want to separate ourselves from our
normal notions of success and failure. If you are having the intention of generating compassion, you are doing the practice. Even if your mind wandered for 99% of the exercise, but you had the intention to practice when you first began, you are doing the practice. See if you can congratulate yourself for making the effort. Now that we have introduced the practice, why don’t we give it a try. These practices are sometimes best learned by doing them rather than talking about them, and I will instruct you throughout the exercise.”

**Loving-kindness Exercise**

**Facilitator Script**

“Begin to focus on your breathing. Notice sensations surrounding the breath as you begin to tune into your body here in this moment.

Allow yourself this time to check in with your body and your experience.

Focusing on the rising and falling of the belly.

Inbreath, outbreath.

Rising, falling.

Just this breath, just this moment.

And when you feel comfortable resting with the flow of your breathing, begin picturing a person in your life who loves or loved you well. If you have trouble imagining a person, just imagine feelings of love and compassion being directed towards you. Imagine what it feels like to receive and bask in this person’s love. You may want to
imagine the person here in the room, looking down on you with kindness and warmth. Recall how this person supported you in good times and bad. Recall what love with no or at least few conditions feels like. Bask in what it’s like to be accepted *despite, and perhaps because of your flaws.* Your flaws make you intriguing, unique, human and loveable. Allow yourself to bask in the feelings as if you’re absorbing sunshine on a beach, absorbing the warmth of compassion and love, and letting it permeate your entire being. Continue sitting in whatever feelings of compassion you are able to imagine this person sending you.

And now we will become the source as well as the object of these feelings. We will generate the feelings for ourselves. Allow the compassionate person you have been visualizing to fade, and begin taking ownership of the feelings, sending kindness, compassion, and love to yourself.

Just observe your body and mind and realize that you are worthy of compassion, even if you have flaws, make mistakes, have negative moods, or have been through terrible struggles.

Just realize that you can give unconditional regard to yourself, just as the other person did. You can be compassionate towards yourself *despite, and perhaps because of* your flaws. What you may have previously labeled flaws or mistakes may have been a necessary part of your journey that helped make you who you are today, given you perspective, or made you an interesting person.
Care for yourself as you would a puppy or a newborn.

Allowing all judgments to fade.

Bathe in your own kindness and acceptance.

You may find this practice difficult. Your mind may wander, or you may feel that you’re not succeeding. Your intention to be compassionate is powerful in itself. Even if you are able to generate only one moment, one glimmer of kindness and compassion for yourself, this can be a powerful and informative practice, which you can return to again.

As you rest here, sending compassion to yourself, you may find it useful to silently say the following intentions or simply hear them and let them resonate within you.

May I be free from suffering.

May I know peace.

May I experience contentment.

See if these phrases resonate within you. Just let them wash over you. If they feel appropriate then let these intentions and feelings spread within you. Once again, letting the intentions resonate within:

May I be free from suffering.

May I know peace.

May I experience contentment.

Just being present with yourself. Just sending compassion to yourself.
If your mind drifts away, or you are having thoughts that this practice may be strange or difficult, just notice that your mind was thinking and invite it to come back to the practice. This practice is definitely new for most people, and thus maybe even strange. Just give yourself permission to try it and leave evaluations for later.

[Note: At this point during the Loving-kindness with Visualized Action Plan meditation during Session 4, the meditation shifts from this point in the script to the Loving-kindness with Visualized Action Plan script on page 114].

Now that we have generated compassion for ourselves, we will begin to send similar feelings outward. We will first expand the field of compassion to include someone who it is easy for us to send these feelings toward. Choose a person whom you care about deeply, whether family or friend, and hold them in your heart with the same love, acceptance, and unconditional regard you gave to yourself. Recognize that this person struggles just as we do. Recognize that they wish to be free from suffering and happy just as we do. Recognize that we love them despite and perhaps even because of their imperfections. Their imperfections make them interesting and give them flavor. Envision holding them in these feelings of compassion and love. Sending them the same warmth, acceptance, and love that we attempted to send ourselves. The intention is more important than the vividness of any image, so do not fret if the image or feeling seems vague at times.

And now we’ll repeat the intentions for them:

May my loved one be free from suffering.
May my loved one know peace.
May my loved one experience contentment.
Letting the intentions resonate within:
May my loved one be free from suffering.
May my loved one know peace.
May my loved one experience contentment.

[Note: At this point in the Loving-kindness Exercise with Someone With Whom One has Difficulties in Session 3, the script shifts from this point to the Loving-kindness Exercise with Someone With Whom One has Difficulties script on page 98]

Now, we will expand the circle or field of compassion further to people who are not so clearly connected to us. Let’s extend feelings of loving-kindness to our community. Extending compassion to the people who we interact with everyday, often without thinking about it. Your neighbors, your classmates, people you have shared a glance with, but perhaps never met. The person who serves your morning coffee or sells you a movie ticket, people you take classes with but have never spoken to, the city workers who clean the streets or janitors who clean your classrooms, endless people who you are connected to and facilitate your life.

We may not often think about these people, and many times they do not even enter our consciousness. However, if we think about them for a moment we can realize
that just like us, they share the desire to be free from suffering, to exist in peace, and to find contentment.

Sending them the same acceptance, kindness, and compassion that we sent ourselves and our loved one.

Generating the Intentions:
May my community be free from suffering.
May my community know peace.
May my community experience contentment.

Letting the intentions resonate within:
May my community be free from suffering.
May my community know peace.
May my community experience contentment.

Just generating compassion, and being present with our own experience. It may be extremely challenging, with the mind drifting, daydreaming, or possibly even resisting the activity. Just observe the mind’s activities, including what it feels like to attempt to generate compassion, and invite it back whenever it wanders.

Once again, we’ll expand the circle outwards, jumping greatly from our community to all the world’s people. See if you can send the same feelings of compassion to people across the entire globe. Despite tremendous diversity among people’s and conflicts that often arise, we can contemplate that all people share the core desires to be free from suffering, to exist in peace, and to find contentment. We may want
to consider that wars are more often caused by the ignorance of large bureaucratic institutions than evil in one person. Perhaps you might consider that governments start wars, not individual citizens, or that our country is now allies with countries such as Germany, Russia, and Japan, which were once our enemies.

Consider all the people who live in conditions much harsher than our own, people who are starving or surrounded by political turmoil and warfare. Attempt to send the same acceptance, kindness, and compassion to the world’s people.

Cultivating the intentions:
May all people be free from suffering.
May all people know peace.
May all people experience contentment.

Letting the intentions resonate within:
May all people be free from suffering.
May all people know peace.
May all people experience contentment.

And now let’s extend our compassion outward one last time to include life beyond humans. Let’s consider all animals, plants, and the ecosystem as a whole. We can ponder how we are animals, and like us all other animals likely wish to be free from suffering. We can also ponder oceans, rivers, mountains, and the soil which bring us food. Realizing that all life is connected, and that all life can be endangered and deserves
care. Also realizing that our entire planet is part of a larger universe, a larger system, and that it itself can be vulnerable to dangers such as asteroids and comets.

Realizing that all life forms are connected.

Cultivating the intentions:

May all beings be free from suffering.

May all beings know peace.

May all beings experience contentment.

Letting the intentions resonate within:

May all beings be free from suffering.

May all beings know peace.

May all beings experience contentment.

For the next few minutes direct feelings of loving-kindness and compassion wherever you wish, either to yourself, your loved ones, your community, or the world.

Now as we are about to wrap up this meditation you may want to give yourself credit for attempting to generate compassion and connectedness today. Just sitting here in this way may be healing in itself. It may carry over to our life. As you move back out into your daily routine in the world, you may notice an instance when loving-kindness suddenly pops into your head. This might happen in the most simple of circumstances such as an exchange with a cashier. You might linger a moment longer, pay a compliment, or even just share a smile. The possibilities are pleasant to consider. In a
few moments I will ring the chimes to end the exercise. Remember to transition gently back to the room.”

Processing and Discussion

Processing Description

The basic format or principles for this Processing and Discussion period are the same as the Processing and Discussion period after the Mindfulness exercise in Session 1. In the current author’s experience leading loving-kindness meditations, a student has never had a negative experience. Often participants say they are intrigued and really like the idea of sending compassion to others. They frequently say that their ability to sustain attention varied, and their ability to generate feelings of compassion fluctuated. However, most are able to generate at least some feelings of love, kindness, and compassion. The facilitator can remind the participants that these are difficult practices, and that a key part is to practice self-compassion about one’s ability to do the compassion meditation.

Summary and Preview

Summary Description.

The facilitator reviews what they have done in this session and points out how unique this type of experience is. The facilitator points out that many people do not take the time to be mindfully present or spent time cultivating compassion for themselves or others. The facilitator asks the participants if they might want to give themselves congratulations or a “pat on the back” for engaging in these practices today. The
facilitator also points out that these are difficult practices and that people often dedicate
their entire lives to cultivating the qualities of mindfulness and loving-kindness.
Therefore, they are encouraged to bring patience, non-judgment, acceptance, and self-
compassion to their practice. The facilitator previews the upcoming activities, passes out
bibliotherapy materials for week one: Chapter 2, Attitudes and Intentions and Chapter 9,
Connectedness, of *Full Catastrophe Living*, (Kabat-Zinn, 1990), gives each participant a
CD with mindfulness and loving-kindness audio recordings, and encourages participants
to meditate at home and bring mindfulness and loving-kindness to their daily lives as
much as possible.

**Session 2**

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<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total minutes</strong></td>
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**Check-in**

The facilitator answers any questions from the last session or that have occurred
to participants during the week. The facilitator asks participants how they are doing. If a
participant tells a story or mentions any aspect of their experience, the facilitator can use this to exemplify how to utilize mindfulness and loving-kindness.

**Mindfulness Exercise**

**Exercise Description**

This exercise begins in the same manner as the mindfulness exercise in session 1, but then adds an additional ten minutes by directing the participants’ awareness to other objects of awareness: the pause before the inbreath, the path of the breath, mindful awareness of the body.

**Facilitator Script**

“To begin, assume a comfortable, but not slouching posture in a chair that will allow you to breathe fully. This posture has been called sitting with dignity. Or lie on a mat, finding a comfortable position on the floor.

Allow yourself to settle in and come fully to this place and this moment.

Now let’s begin by attending to our breathing.

Observe the breath in the belly. As we relax, we begin to breathe from the belly. The belly rises on the inbreath and falls on the outbreath. Place your mind in the belly and feel the sensations. One long-time meditator once said that no two breaths are the same. This means that if we pay close attention we may notice slight differences in our breathing: in the depth, speed, fluidity, or the amount of air. Such a simple thing as breathing can become highly interesting if we just pay attention.

Stay with the breath.
Inbreath, outbreath.

Rising, falling.

It may help you to place this gentle label on parts of the breathing process: saying to yourself, rising, falling, or in, out. Whatever works for you.

Just see if you can attend for one breath, and then another breath, and another.

Just this breath,

and then the next breath.

Just this moment,

and then the next.

If at any point you notice that your mind has drifted into thoughts, memories from the past, concerns about the future, or possibly even evaluative thoughts about what we’re doing right now, just notice that your mind has drifted into a pattern that it is very used to. You might silently say to yourself, “ah mind, you’ve been drifting again, but right now, we’re attending to breath, please come back with me.” And you return.

Return 1,000 times if necessary. This is the practice.

Now, I’d like to bring your attention to the pauses within the breath cycle. After you finish your exhalation, notice that there is a pause before the inbreath. Bring your attention to this pause and see if you can inhabit or dwell in this pause. While attending to the pause, notice that the next inbreath arises.

You do not have to control it.

It comes.
It arises.

Your body knows how to breathe.

Some people find it interesting to sit within this pause.

Just observing breathing and sitting in the pause.

    Now notice the other pause, which occurs after the inbreath. This is a shorter pause, yet we can still observe it.

    So now we observe inbreath, pause, outbreath, longer pause, which we dwell in and await the arising of the outbreath. Now we’re attending to the four parts of the process of breathing: Inbreath, pause, outbreath, pause. Attending to the cycle of breathing.

    Now let’s shift our awareness to the path of the breath.

    The breath begins at the tip of the nose. As the inbreath enters we may notice it feels slightly cooler, as it is coming from outside our bodies.

    The breath moves through the nose, through nasal cavities, into the back of the throat, down into the upper lungs, the lower lungs, and the belly rises fully. The process reverses on the outbreath. Just follow this path of the breathing. It moves quickly and some parts may be easier to feel than others. No worries. Just attend to the path as you feel it.

    Sitting with the path of our breath.

    Some have used the phrase, “The breath breathes us”, rather than we breathe. This denotes the attitude of letting go, and acceptance.
The breath breathes us.

We observe breathing.

The body knows how to breathe.

    Now I’d like to bring your attention to your body as a whole.

    What is going on in your body now?

    You may feel pressure or support from the floor, air on your skin, clothes on your body, relaxation or tension in muscles, possibly even discomfort or pain.

If you feel a sensation, whether relaxation, irritation, itching or even pain, bring a spirit of curiosity and inquiry to it, asking, “What is this?” If you feel something which you would normally label painful, notice that your initial reaction would be to label it as negative and wish it to go away. You might normally add some thoughts to the pain or discomfort, such as “annoying” or “why me?” But in this exercise see if you can open to sensations even if you would normally call them uncomfortable. Investigate them. Rather than pushing them away, create a space around them. Invite them in and observe them.

Whether pleasant or unpleasant can you notice anything about sensations. Are they constant or do they fluctuate? Are they pulsing or steady? Is there anything associated with sensations such as heat or maybe even a color in your mind?

    Simply inquire as to what is there without evaluating.

    Stay with the area. You will likely find another area calling your attention. Notice it calling. And when you’re ready make a conscious decision to go investigate this new area.
Again with curiosity, openness, non-judgment, and acceptance inquire these new sensations in your body. It’s possible you may not feel much, your body may just feel neutral. If that’s the case, notice neutrality in your body with the same sense of inquiry. Notice the absence of strong sensations. Just reconnecting with your body, as it is now, here, in this moment.

For the last part of this exercise, you can choose what you wish to attend to whether the breath at the belly, the breath with pauses, the entire path of the breath, or your body. I will ring the chime to end the exercise in two minutes.

**Processing and Discussion**

Same method as Session 1.

**Psychoeducation: Benefits of Connectedness**

**Origins of the Psychoeducation Session**


**Facilitator Script**

“The purpose of this discussion period is to provide you information to support and enhance the meditations we are doing. There are two main ways to pursue meditative
disciplines. One is experiential or by doing it – we’re already doing this. Another is intellectually, by reading about or talking about the practices. The experiential (meditating) and the intellectual (reading about or talking about meditation) complement each other.

So now let’s pursue the intellectual. Hopefully, this discussion will clarify how or why we’re meditating. It also may provide us motivation to continue meditating and help us bring any useful lessons we learn while meditating into our lives.

What are we doing in this intervention?

If we had to boil it down, it’s really about connecting with ourselves and connecting with the world. Basically, we’re remembering, realizing, and enhancing connectedness. What is connectedness? Just as it sounds, connectedness is a state of being connected, in contact with, in touch with. Connectedness is also related to terms such as supporting, cooperation, and even love.

In mindfulness, we reconnect with ourselves. We take time out, pause, sit, and attend to our bodies and minds, opening to every aspect of our experience in this moment. In loving-kindness we reconnect with ourselves by recognizing our need for love, kindness, and compassion. We then attempt to provide these for ourselves, which can actually be quite challenging. Then we reconnect with the world by recognizing that all people desire to be free from suffering and to experience contentment. By projecting love and kindness outward, we may be most kind to ourselves. Sending love,
compassion, and kindness outward may give us a break from worry and feelings of separation and lessen feelings of isolation.

Let’s discuss further why we may want to connect or reconnect. There are many reasons, but I’ll break them down into three main categories. Reason # 1 is that it is natural, Reason # 2 is that it feels good, Reason # 3 is that it is good for us.

**Reason # 1: It’s natural.**

Many of the founders of the great spiritual and wisdom traditions, people I like to call the “sages of the ages” (sage means a profoundly wise person) have emphasized the inherent connectedness of all life, and modern science is increasingly confirming this. We can see this connectedness when we think about the dozens of people who have supported us throughout our lives. There are all the more obvious people such as friends and family, but then we can extend further to think of all our teachers, all our mentors, everyone involved in every meal we ever ate, everyone who built the society, laws, knowledge base, and educational systems we benefit from.

The reading packet which you were given last week described scientific and medical findings which reveal connectedness. Quantum physics reveals both the inherent uncertainty in the universe and the inherent connectedness. Science used to operate according to objectivity, the idea that I am a separate and objective observer and can accurately measure an inactive subject. That I see the truth. Increasingly, we realize that pure objectivity is a myth, and that subject and object co-create an intersubjective
We make the reality, together (gently motions to all the participants).

Psychoneuroimmunology is a fancy word which essentially describes connectedness between our minds, immune system, and our bodies. Our mood and emotions effect our body and vice versa. Traditional biomedicine treated the body as machine, the doctor as mechanic, and drugs as a cure. Holistic or integrative medicine understands complexity and connectedness, and promotes health and healing at multiple levels including mind, body, and spirit.

Thus, evidence from multiple sources including the sages of the ages, quantum physics, postmodern philosophy, systems theories, and psychoneuroimmunology increasingly point toward connectedness within our own bodies, and connectedness between ourselves and the rest of the world. Sometimes we forget about these connections or just don’t attend to them. In this course, we’re remembering or noticing these connections.

*Reason #2. Connecting feels good.*

A second reason to connect is that it feels good. When we connect to our experience in this moment, it’s often more pleasurable. When we attend to the strawberry, we savor the experience. When we’re constantly thinking what just happened, or what’s next, we’re not here to enjoy the present.

Connecting to others, whether through compassionate feelings or service, which is sometimes called altruism, has also been shown to produce a positive mood that has been
called the “Helper’s High” (Luks & Payne, 1993). Thus, there is evidence that both connecting to our experience and connecting to others is associated with feeling good.

**Reason #3. Connecting is good for us.**

Health could be considered a system of feedback loops. Hunger, fatigue, and pain are signals in feedback loops. When we connect and attend to these signals, the system self-regulates, returning us to balance, or homeostasis, and health. When we’re disconnected, and we ignore or deny signals from our bodies and minds we run into trouble. An example would be pushing through fatigue, using caffeine. We’ve all done it occasionally, but what happens when we ignore signals for months or even years.

You could probably think up similar examples of ignoring pain signals and pushing through an injury. Athletic teams glorify playing through pain. I’m not here to debate glory. Glory can be great. But what happens when it fades. And the funny thing is some of us ignore physical pain, even when there’s no glory to be had. Our bodies are constantly sending us signals whether to stop playing through pain or to simply change our body position so our muscles don’t get tight. The question is: do we listen?

And it’s not just the physical signals. Our emotions attempt to send us signals and feedback as well. Emotions tell us what’s important, what to move toward, and what to move away from. They help us make sense of the world and provide meaning. When we ignore our emotions, we can’t utilize this information, can’t make meaning, and our systems can fall out of balance. By not fighting our emotions, the negative ones may run
their course, and we may gain the wisdom contained within them. Allowing and accepting all our emotions may also make more space for positive experiences as well. Thus, reconnecting with our physical and emotional sensations, honoring these feelings, and treating ourselves with compassion allow us to make wise choices. We might decide not to abuse caffeine. We might decide to sleep when tired. We might honor all of our emotions and gain the wisdom contained within them.

Thus, reconnecting with ourselves helps us move towards self-care, balance, and health. Yet, it may not be enough to just reconnect with ourselves. We are part of larger systems, such as families, friends, communities, organizations, our culture, and nature. It’s also important for us to connect to this larger whole. In loving-kindness we recognize and try to enhance these connections to others and the world.

Several studies point out that connecting to something outside ourselves can be good for us. Sometimes it can be as simple as connecting to a plant. Researchers gave people in a retirement home plants. Half the people were told that an employee would come in every day and care for the plant. Half were told that it was their job to care for the plant. Those who took on the responsibility of caring for the plant had better health.

In another study, one side of a building faced another building, and the other faced trees. This was only difference. Think of all the other variables in these peoples’ lives: jobs, relationships, finances. Yet the people whose apartments faced the trees had better health. The researchers believed that seeing nature, or connecting with nature, was related to the health benefits.
Other studies have shown that owning a pet or connecting with a pet, has a number of health benefits.

Connecting with other people can also benefit us. Social support is one of the most powerful variables associated with health. Often it is more predictive of health outcomes than other variables, which were traditionally thought of as the cause of illness such as obesity, cholesterol, or blood pressure.

Altruism or serving others has also been shown to lead to improved health and improved mood.

Other studies have shown that even short term connectedness or compassion interventions can have an effect. In one study, college students, such as yourselves, who watched a 10 minute video of Mother Teresa performing selfless and loving deeds experienced boost in their immune systems. When the participants followed up the movie by considering times in their lives when they loved others or were loved, their immune system stayed elevated for one hour. Thus, even interventions which are much briefer than the course we’re doing now are beneficial.

Thus, there is considerable evidence that connecting to others is beneficial to our health. It may also be beneficial to our happiness. The “sages of the ages” have long proposed that the path to happiness was to transcend the self, to devote oneself to a purpose larger than oneself. Recent positive psychology research is confirming this. Seligman (2002) has found pursuing a meaningful life is one of the most reliable paths to happiness, and meaning is almost always found by dedicating oneself to serving
something bigger than oneself. Loving-kindness meditation is one way to transcend the self, to find meaning by directing compassion and kindness to those outside of oneself.

Thus, in wishing well for others, we may be doing well for ourselves. Others have called this enlightened selfishness. Direct compassion, kindness, and love outward because it feels good, helps us get outside our worried minds for a moment, and provides us with a sense of meaning and purpose. Thus, we’ve proposed three main reasons to pursue connectedness.

Reason 1 is that connectedness the natural state of the world. We’re connected whether we like it or not. We can choose how much we want to attend to and nurture those connections. Reason 2 is it feels good. Research indicates that both connecting to the moment and connecting to others are enjoyable experiences. Reason 3 is that connecting is good for us. Connecting to our own bodies and emotions promotes balance and health. Connecting to others promotes health, meaning, and happiness.

*Loving-kindness Exercise*

Same method as Session 1.

*Processing and Discussion*

Same method as Session 1.

*Summary and Preview*

Same method as Session 1.

**Session 3**

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Check-in

Same method as Session 2.

*Introduction to Loving-kindness with Person with Whom One Has Difficulties*

*Origins of the Exercise and Modifications.*

Traditional descriptions of Loving-kindness meditation have all emphasized the flexibility of the practice and that it can be used to direct loving-kindness to a variety of people and things. The traditional descriptions also point out the utility of practicing loving-kindness with those who people with whom one would not normally feel loving-kindness for in order to build forgiveness and replace negative emotions such as anger or jealousy with more positive emotions such a love, kindness, or compassion, or at least move towards these states, possibly by at least developing acceptance, or lowering the intensity of the negative emotion (Salzberg, 1995). Kabat-Zinn (1990) does not include
loving-kindness toward a difficult person in MBSR, but he describes the practice in *Coming to Our Senses* (Kabat-Zinn, 2005). Carson et al (2005) did include a loving-kindness meditation for a difficult person. The current exercise follows the general format used in several sources (Salzberg, 1995; Carson et al, 2005; Gyatso, 2001) but the current author used his own phrasing.

**Facilitator Script.**

“Loving-kindness is a difficult practice. It can be very difficult to cultivate vivid and strong feelings even for those we love. Attempting to generate feelings of kindness, and positive regard for those with whom we have had difficulties may be even more difficult. And yet the act of shifting negative feelings of anger, dislike, jealousy, or perhaps jealousy can free enormous amount of energy within us, and lead to more peace of mind and happiness. In this practice, we will begin in the exact same way as the first loving-kindness exercises we did. We will mindfully focus on the breath, then visualize someone sending us love and kindness, and then generate these feelings for ourselves. Just as in the other loving-kindness exercise we will then send loving-kindness to someone very close to us. However, after that the exercise will change and we will move toward attempting to send loving-kindness to someone with whom we have difficulties. We will do this by focusing on our commonalties, by realizing that person wants to be free from suffering and also wants to be happy, and by practicing a form of radical acceptance. Via radical acceptance we realize that the other person is a product of their genetics and experiences. Thus, if we had their genetics and their experiences, we would
be them. Therefore, we attempt to cut them a break. We may not agree with everything
they do, but we realize that they have their own struggle, and we could easily be them.
You probably should not start with the person who causes you the most difficulties,
someone who you might even apply the label ‘enemy’ to. You can build up to that with
your home practice. Why don’t you start with someone who you have let annoy you
significantly.”

Loving-kindness Exercise with Person with Whom One Has Difficulties

Facilitator Script.

The beginning of this exercise follows the same script as the Loving-kindness
Exercise in Session 1. That script indicates at what point the script deviates and begins
following the script here to focus on a person with whom one has difficulties. “So now
we have offered up loving-kindness to someone close to us. Now we will begin the
difficult process of attempting to generate forgiveness and acceptance for someone with
whom we have difficulties.

Picture the person in your mind.

Mindfully observe any reactions you have.

Does your body grow tense at all?

Does your mind wish to label and condemn the person, creating a convincing case
of their flaws like a trial attorney? Just observe your reaction as you picture the person.
And now let’s begin pondering how that person came to annoy us. Did our mind play any
part in letting ourselves get so annoyed? It may be true that they did something which we
could call inappropriate, but did our mind rush to label and judge it, and magnify the offense?

Through the exercises in this course, we’ve seen how our mind has a mind of its own. And the mind likes to be self-protective. Whenever, it senses any type of threat it focuses on the threat. In the case of people who annoy us, it creates elaborate stories why they are wrong and we are right.

Is there any element of this in your experience?

It’s also true that they may have wronged us, hurt us, or done something terrible. Can we look at this? Is it possible that they did it because they themselves we hurting? We already recognized that most people want to be free from suffering and to be happy. Is it possible that they were having a hard time meeting those goals and were lashing out in frustration? See if you can step into that person’s shoes for a moment and picture their struggle. It may be hard for you to identify with them. Their values may be totally different than yours.

Now we’ll practice a technique which is called radical acceptance. Radical acceptance involves pondering the fact that we are a result of our genetics and our experience or upbringing. In many ways we don’t have that much control over these. So in radical acceptance we ponder that if we had that person’s genetics and their upbringing we would be them. Ponder this for a moment. You may even be thankful that you’re not that person. But in doing so can you at least be more forgiving? Can you realize that aspects of their struggle are different than yours? We do not have to condone the person’s
behavior, but we can make a decision that we will not let our mind be dominated by negative emotions surrounding this person.

As we move toward the end of the exercise I’ll recite the standard intentions.

May the person be free from suffering
May the person know peace
May the person experience contentment.

Letting them resonate as much as possible:

May the person be free from suffering.
May the person know peace.
May the person experience contentment.

Processing and Discussion

Same method as Session 1.

Psychoeducation: Transferring Loving-kindness to Daily Life

Origins of the Psychoeducation Materials

The current author created this psychoeducation session using vivid stories to connect with the participants’ experience of viewing the world in a hostile or friendly manner. In some manner it parallels cognitive behavioral therapy (Beck & Weishaar, 2005), with the exception that this exercise does not go through a series of steps to examine evidence or reframe thoughts. Instead it asks a more core or heartfelt question, “Do you think the world might relate you differently if you bring more compassion, kindness, and love to your attitudes, intentions, and behaviors?” The exercise indirectly
references research which indicate that hostility (Smith, Glazer, Ruiz, & Gallo, 2004) and suspiciousness (Barefoot, Sigler, and Nowin, 1987), and ego-centrism (Scherwitz & Ornish, 1994) have predicted the severity of heart disease, as well as evidence that depression is associated with negative views of the self, the world, and the future (Seligman, 1992). It references a quote by Einstein (1981) about the importance of deciding whether we live in a hostile or friendly world, and uses a parable from a loving-kindness book (Kornfield, 2002) to illustrate the point about the self-fulfilling nature of intentions and expectations.

Facilitator Script

“We have been meditating and talking about meditation for two weeks now. Last session we talked about the benefits of reconnecting with ourselves and the world, and you’ve done some readings about these topics. But how can these practices affect our day-to-day lives, our daily interactions? Today we’re going to talk about how to transfer the skills and principles of the meditations to our daily lives. First, let’s examine a contrasting situation in which you are going through your daily life, and you’ve forgotten anything even remotely related to this course. You woke up on the wrong side of the bed. You’re busy, worried, mindless, off in a million thoughts, and possibly seeing the world through a negative and hostile lens. We’ve all woken up this way before. Perhaps you get this way midway through finals week. Rather than practicing loving-kindness, your mind has drifted into an opposite state. Let’s label it ‘hateful meanness’. So your mind has drifted into a state of hateful meanness.
You’re certain that the world and the future are bleak. You’re certain that everyone is selfish and out to get each other. You’ve got all your defenses up. You go to your favorite coffee shop. If you don’t go to coffee shops, envision some other establishment that you go to frequently.

There’s a new worker behind the counter. You make a purchase and she/he gives you your change. You carefully count your change because you know everybody is out to get you.

By your count, you are short one dollar.

You scowl and growl: “What are you trying to pull?”

Cashier: “Pardon me, is something wrong?”

You: “You know.”

Cashier: “Is there something wrong with your coffee?”

You: “No, you tried to con me out of a dollar.”

Cashier: “Did I give you the wrong change? I’m so sorry. What are you missing?”

You: “You know darn well what I’m missing.”

Cashier: “Sorry, but I don’t. I try to give the correct change. In fact I pride myself on it. I’ve worked as a cashier in other shops for three years, and have had decreasing mistakes over time. Nobody has pointed out wrong change in 6 months.”

You: “So you admit that you used to suck. Or that you never make mistakes so you must have done it deliberately.”

Cashier: “I’m really sorry sir. Here’s your dollar.”
You: “I’ll have you know that I’ve been coming here three years.”

Cashier: “And we’d like you to continue to come.”

You: “I bet you would, so you can continue to con me.”

Cashier: “Actually, no, I like customers to come back.”

You: “Is the manager here?”

Cashier: “No, but she’ll be hear later.”

You: “You can rest assured I’ll be speaking with her.”

Cashier: “Ok, would you like me to tell her about my mistake?”

You: “Hah, I bet you’d like to spin the story.”

Cashier: “No, I just thought I could own up to my mistake. I’m really sorry.”

You: “Yes you will be.”

The cashier is obviously displeased and not feeling good about himself, and certainly not feeling much love for you. You feel somewhat self-righteous. You have adrenaline surging through your system. You’re ready for battle. You step out of the shop and into the world waiting to conquer the next person who tries to screw you over.

Yet even in this moment in which you feel slightly powerful, you also feel a sense of loss of control and tinges of shame. You’re unsatisfied. You feel no connection and little love. The reality is the staff there will never welcome you like Cheers welcomed Norm. Or if that reference is too old for you, they’ll never welcome you like the night club welcomes 50 cent. You’ve created separation rather than connectedness.
That was a scenario in which you had attitudes and intentions of hostility, suspiciousness, and mistrust. For fun, we labeled it hateful meanness rather than loving-kindness. It was purposefully funny, but it rings true because we’ve all had times when our mind drifted toward negativity and suspicion. Later when we could see more clearly, we realized that our mind had been wrong, and hopefully we could laugh about it and maybe learn from it.

Now let’s reverse the scenario to bring attitudes and intentions of love, kindness, and compassion the situation. This time you wake up and notice that you’re feeling a little grumpy. You decide to start your day with ten minutes of loving-kindness meditation. As your walk out the door you decide to continue practicing as you walk to the coffee shop. You’re attempting to bond with the people and nature you see as you walk. You realize that the people you see have their own struggles and wish to be free from suffering.

The new employee gives you one dollar less.

This time you’re in friendly world. In fact you’re practicing loving-kindness. Option one is that you just smile and make chit chat, and don’t even count your money, as you trust that most people try to do the right thing. So you don’t notice that she gave you one less dollar. You’re one dollar poorer. You just shared a positive moment. Are you worse off? If you are, by how much?

In option two you count the money.
You notice mistake and look for understanding within yourself. If your mind jumps to suspiciousness you can watch those thoughts, step back, and realize that it was likely a simple mistake.

Without blaming, you say: “okay, five, wasn’t it six?”

Cashier: “Oh my, I’m so sorry? That’s horrible. I pride myself on this. Seriously, I never goof. Sorry, it must be because I didn’t sleep last night. Yet I’ve done all nighters before and not messed up.”

You: “I can barely tie my shoes if I get six hours sleep instead of eight.”

Cashier: “Yes well, it was probably my most brutal final ever.”

You: “I hope you did alright and that you get some rest.”

Cashier: “Thanks, & thanks for being so cool.”


Cashier: “Bye (smiling).”

You step out of the shop feeling good, ready to meet the world. Eager to see what other kind person you will meet next.

The two situations were dramatized to make them memorable, but we’ve probably all felt some version of our moods coloring our interactions. You probably had a day when you felt good, felt at one with the world, and were giving and receiving love from the world. We could say you were tapping into connectedness. It feels good and everything seems to flow.
And you’ve probably also had a taste of the first scenario, in which the whole world seems hostile. We also know that hostility and suspiciousness are bad for our health, particularly our hearts, and that depression is related to negative views of ourselves, the world, and our future.

Einstein has said that the most important choice we have to make is, “Do we live in a hostile or friendly world?”

In some ways this entire course is about seeing the world as friendly, and treating the world with friendliness.

The 2nd scenario is an example of bringing the attitudes learned in this intervention to your life. Traditionally meditation has been broken down into formal and informal practice. Formal practice is what we do in the group when we meditate together. Informal practice is basically your life. Or, everything in your life is an opportunity to practice. Thus, everything can be a meditation, whether washing the dishes, talking to your lover, or buying a latte. You bring the principles and practices learned in the class to your daily life. Essentially you can practice meditation anywhere at any time. You don’t drop down, pull out a pillow, close your eyes, and start meditating when you’re in class or in line at the local coffee shop. But you bring the principles learned in the class to your experiences.

I’ll now read you a parable to reinforce this topic. Sometimes a parable does a better job explaining ideas than a long list of psychological findings.
A long time ago, a traveler comes upon a new town. He sees a beggar at the side of the road at the entrance gate to the town. The traveler asks, “How are the people in this town?”

The beggar asks, “How were the people in your last town?”

The traveler responds, “Kind, generous, honorable, and loving.”

The beggar replies, “You’ll find them the same here.”

Then another traveler walks up. She asks the beggar the same question, “How are the people in this town?”

Again the beggar asks, “How were the people in your last town?”

The second traveler responds, “Mean, miserly, distrustful, and hateful.”

The beggar replies, “You’ll find them the same here.”

One message of this parable is that our expectations, intentions, and attitudes can be self-fulfilling. If we choose to meet the world with suspiciousness and hostility, it seems less likely that the world will meet us with love and kindness. And if we envision the world with love and kindness, it seems possible that we may find more of these.

We’re not encouraging you to lower every boundary or take unwise risks, but we’re asking if you can experiment and mindfully watch how your intentions, attitudes, and expectations affect your reality. See if bringing loving-kindness to your life works for you.
**Introduction to the In Vivo Loving-kindness Exercise**

*Origins of the Exercise and Modifications.*

This exercise is based on descriptions found in Ladner’s (2004) *The Lost Art of Compassion* and the Dalai Lama’s (2001) *The Compassionate Life*. It has been modified for college students and customized due to the specific nature of the time limits and location of the exercise. This exercise reveals how loving-kindness meditation can be done anywhere and how the principles from the class can be transferred into participants’ daily lives.

*Facilitator Script:*

“We will now be going outside the building and attempting to practicing loving-kindness while walking around outside. So we will all walk outside for twenty minutes and attempt to practice loving-kindness meditation. Try to spread out, give each other some space, and please do not talk to each other.

Once you get outside, try to send feelings of loving-kindness to whatever most calls your attention. I’ll give you a few suggestions of things you might encounter. If you see people, perhaps you can ponder that they wish to be free from suffering and to be happy. You may even want to recite intentions to yourself. Assuming you’re looking at a small group, you could say, “May they be free from suffering. May they know peace. May they experience contentment.”
See if you can see connectedness and find commonalities between the world and yourself. If you see an older person, recall your grandparents, or realize that you too will soon be older. Respect their struggle. Attempt to develop feelings of loving-kindness for them.

If you see something which might usually annoy you or make you feel separate, attempt to watch your reaction to it. If you’re an environmentalist, perhaps you see someone litter. If you’re a punk rocker, perhaps you see a conservative person, someone “of the establishment.” See if you can notice that it is your mind that categorizes and separates. Realize that you don’t truly know that other person. See if you can realize that that person shares the desire to be happy and to be loved. Realize that that person is a product of their genetics and their experiences. Realize that if you had their genetics and their experience, you would be them. See if you can project this radical acceptance onto them. Attempt to send them loving-kindness. Perhaps use intentions.

If you see nature, perhaps, trees, or plants, or the night sky, or even feel the air which enters your lungs, see if you can appreciate your connectedness to nature. Ponder interdependence. Realize that you are a part of nature. Ponder how you emerged from it, how it nurtures you, and how you will go back to it. You may want to wish nature or the ecosystem loving-kindness using intentions. You might want to customize the intentions to be more nature specific, such as “May we learn to care for you.” I’ll leave that up to your imagination.
It’s likely that your mind will wander elsewhere during the exercise. The mind has long established habits of wandering, usually drifting into the past or future, and often into self-absorbed thoughts. If you find your mind has drifted, simply come back to the exercise. Simply remind yourself that you are practicing loving-kindness. At first practicing loving-kindness in the street may seem difficult or forced, but keep trying. Hopefully, as you keep trying it may become more heartfelt.

If you bump into someone you know, see if you can bring loving-kindness to the interaction. Listen and speak with loving-kindness. Project loving-kindness onto them. Try not to get pulled out of the exercise. If talking to your friend is too distracting, you may want to excuse yourself. You will likely see others from our group. Try to give each other space. It’s fine to wish loving-kindness on others from the group, but try not to engage them in conversation. If it’s cold, feel free to step into a shop.

The task is really not limited. And please don’t think that you have to do all the suggestions we just covered or that it’s somehow “better” if you focus on the whole planet than if you focus on a dog or one tree that you see. There really is no rule indicating that focusing on the whole planet is better than focusing on a tree. Both could be effective at building loving-kindness in your mind and heart. It is a personal practice.

It’s important to work with what comes up for you rather than following my recommendations. Thus, I’d like to send you out there with the basic instruction of trying to send loving-kindness to the world. Are there any questions before we begin?
In Vivo Loving-kindness Exercise

This exercise is participant directed. There is no script.

Processing and Discussion

Same method as Session 1.

Summary and Preview

Same method as Session 1.

Session 4

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Check-in

Same method as Session 2.

Loving-kindness Exercise

Same method as Session 2

Processing and Discussion

Same method as Session 1.
Group Discussion of Intervention So Far

Origins of the Exercise and Modifications.

This exercise will be based entirely on a similar exercise in MBSR (Kabat-Zinn, 1990) with no modifications, except that the content generated by the participants may differ as the interventions are different.

Description of the Group Discussion.

The facilitator asks participants how the intervention has gone for them, asks if people are willing to share their stories, and then opens the floor for discussion. The facilitator practices “letting go” by realizing that people will likely find the place and time to speak. Thus, the facilitator does not try to instruct people to go around the room in a particular manner, point to people who raise their hands, nor give any guidance on how the group should take turns. This discussion period hopefully allows people to bond and share about both the successes and difficulties which they encountered in this intervention, and can also expand to include their overall struggles to cultivate connectedness and compassion in their lives. Ideally, all the participants would share a few comments. Time and space will also be allowed for discussion which emerges from comments. If the participants voice difficulties, resistance, or lack of effects, the facilitator remains non-defensive and points out that these practices are difficult, often take time to master, and may not be for everyone.
Introduction to Loving-kindness with Visualized Action Plan

Origins of the Exercise and Modifications

This exercise starts with a normal loving-kindness meditation, and then rather than attempting to cultivate compassion for others in this moment, it asks participants to consider how they might practice loving-kindness in their lives in the future. The current author is not aware of any other study or meditation writing that has used this method. Essentially, it is a method of transferring the principles in the class to their future lives. It is similar to visualization of future performances (Richardson, 1967) that have been used in sports psychology. By pondering changes that they might undertake in the future, the exercise could also help participants move from contemplation or preparation toward action within a transtheoretical model of change (Prochaska, 2006).

Facilitator Script.

“In this practice, we will begin in the exact same way as the first loving-kindness exercises we did. We will mindfully focus on the breath, then visualize someone sending us love and kindness, and then generate these feelings for ourselves. From this point there will be a slight modification. Previously we sent the intentions of loving-kindness outward in an ever-widening reach or span. In this exercise, we will focus on more real world examples of how we could actually practice loving-kindness in our lives in the future. I will make several suggestions about ways in which you might bring loving-kindness into your life. However, you can also be creative and self-directed in thinking
up ways to transfer these practices to your life. There will be considerable open time in
the meditation, times when I will not speak, where you can be self-directed. Also, please
don’t feel you’re making a contract with yourself. We’re playing around with options and
possibilities. Do not limit yourself. Let your mind wander freely about what you might
do. When we’re done you might decide not to some of the things we considered. And you
would hopefully be compassionate with yourself about this decision.”

**Loving-kindness Exercise with Visualized Action Plan**

**Exercise Description**

The first part of this exercise is the same as the Loving-kindness exercise in
Session 1. The script for the Loving-kindness Exercise in Session 1 indicates the point at
which the Loving-kindness Exercise with Visualized Action Plan in Session 4 shifts to
the script below.

**Facilitator Script:**

(Continuing from Session 1 script) “Now that we’ve sent compassion to ourselves
let’s begin envisioning how we might bring the principles of loving-kindness into our
lives. A first step is deciding that we want more loving-kindness, acceptance, and
compassion in our lives. Undoubtedly, these meditations are difficult, but perhaps you
had a moment or two in this course when you realized that sending compassion to
yourself or others feels good, and that you’d like to continue doing so. So just deciding
that you want more loving-kindness in your life is a major step. I’ll state this as an intention. See if it resonates for you.

Deciding that love, compassion, and kindness are valuable,

Deciding that I would like to cultivate these qualities in my mind and heart

Deciding that I will bring these principles into my daily life.

See if this resonates with you. If not customize the intentions or see what you’re willing to experiment with.

Now, let’s ponder how you might bring these principles into your life. First, let’s think how we might bring attitudes of loving-kindness to our minds. In this course, you’ve probably noticed how your mind has a mind of its own, how it wanders and bounces from topic to topic, and how much of its activity is self-focused and self-absorbed. You’ve probably also noticed that your mind creates separation between yourself and others. It instantly categorizes, creating likes and dislikes. Perhaps when you’re in a bad mood your mind may grow suspicious of others, and may even grow hostile. Perhaps you may have noticed a self-fulfilling aspect to these types of thoughts. When you meet the world with suspicion or hostility, it tends to not to embrace you.

Are you willing to experiment with more compassionate attitudes? Can you think now of ways in which you might shift your thoughts toward more loving-kindness? Are there times when you were suspicious of others and were wrong? How might you bring more compassion, kindness, and acceptance to your mental life? Are you willing to mindfully observe your mind, noticing your thoughts, noticing how different types of thoughts,
whether hostile or loving effect your life? When you see your mind drifting toward suspiciousness or hostility can you watch the effects on your mind and body? Can you try to make a shift to compassion and see what happens?

Now imagine yourself back in your normal routine two weeks from now. Are there any opportunities for you to shift your thoughts toward loving-kindness? Perhaps you can think about things that annoy you. Maybe you can think about parking tickets, speeding tickets, or professors assigning too much homework or giving difficult midterms. Do these normally make you angry or annoy you? Now see if you can envision looking at one of these situations in the future with loving-kindness.

Are the people involved in your annoyance, the parking attendant or the professor, really out to get you or might they have a larger purpose? Might they actually provide a benefit? And if we look at the individual parking attendant, police officer, or professor, might it be true that they wish to be free from suffering and to be happy. Is it also possible that they believe they are serving others by doing their jobs? See if you can see a scenario like this unfolding in your life.

So we might say some intentions with how we will work with thoughts in the future:

Realizing that I am not my thoughts
Realizing I can detach from my thoughts and observe them mindfully
Realizing that I can shift my thoughts toward compassion and kindness

Now let’s think about ways you bring loving-kindness into your actions.
The majority of the world’s wisdom traditions have urged that service or helping others is a pathway to meaning and happiness. This is also being confirmed by modern positive psychology.

So what might be some small ways that you could serve. Also remember that serving does not have to be huge, nor does it always need a formal volunteer job title. You could serve in a multitude of ways. You don’t really have to change your routine a great deal. Possibly you could simply try to bring loving-kindness to all of your interactions.

Maybe you decide to make every transaction with a cashier or server a pleasant one. Thus, you try to boost the mood of everyone who serves you.

Maybe you could try to ask people about their day, and not just the normal people you ask. Maybe you ask someone who looks like they need it. Maybe someone who has looks lonely or as if they’re carrying the burden of a heavy story.

Maybe you could reconnect with a friend who you’ve fallen out of touch with.

Pondering ways you can bring loving-kindness to your actions.

Now let’s saw a few intentions about how we might serve others or bring loving kindness to our intentions:

Realize that I can serve in a multitude of ways, even when not feeling powerful
Realizing that serving might help me transcend my own concerns.
Realizing that serving might be a path to meaning and happiness.
We talked about shifting our thoughts, and we’ve talked about serving or helping others.

Envisioning ways you can bring loving-kindness into your life.

So now we’re coming to the end of this exercise.

Possibly you’ve envisioned some ways in which you might bring loving-kindness into your life.

I like to end with the intentions, first for ourselves, and then for all beings.

May I be free from suffering.

May I know peace.

May I experience contentment.

Once again:

May I be free from suffering.

May I know peace.

May I experience contentment.

Possibly let these resonate and ponder how you might maintain this feeling in the future.

And now let’s expand it outward to include all life forms.

May all beings be free from suffering.

May all beings know peace.

May all beings experience contentment.

May all beings be free from suffering.
May all beings know peace.

May all beings experience contentment.

Again pondering how you might bring loving-kindness to others in your life.

*Processing and Discussion*

Same method as Session 1.

*Parting Comments*

The facilitator summarizes what the group has done and points out how these practices are universal. They are universal because wisdom tradition across almost every culture and epoch have promoted love, kindness, compassion, and service as a method of transcending the self and leading a healthy, happy, and meaningful life. While they are universal, the act of sitting down and engaging in focused practice is also highly unique in today’s fast-paced culture. The facilitator points out that the participants might want to congratulate themselves in this moment for having engaged in this intervention over four weeks. The facilitator thanks them for participating, and reads a parting poem about compassion and connectedness. Finally, the facilitator leaves the room as a research assistant enters to bring in the post-treatment surveys.