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MAGAZINE™

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EMORY-TIBET
PROGRAM
*Special
Edition*

HIS HOLINESS
THE XIVTH DALAI LAMA

SCHOOL FOR COMPASSION

The Emory-Tibet Partnership

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Publisher/Editor Ute Lawrence | **Art Director** Cathy Morin | **Digital Production** Brent Patroch
Regular Contributors Alexandra Lopez-Pacheco, Susan M. Hunter, Coach Dave Buck, Dr. Larry Ohlhauser, Suzanne Harrill, Nancy Moonstar, Lynda Britton, Ruth Lanius, Pat Newson | **Copy Editor** Natalie Williams
CONTRIBUTOR BIOS: mentalfitnessmagazine.com/about-us/our-contributors

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PUBLISHER'S CORNER

A COUPLE OF YEARS AGO I ATTENDED THE INTERNATIONAL BRAIN, MIND AND BODY CONFERENCE. One of the speakers, Marion Woodman, author and one of the world's foremost Jungian analysts, shared the dream that changed her life.

The dream began with her finding a dead bird in the garden. With the sorrow of loss, she carefully wrapped the bird in a silk scarf and gently put it in a little black box, which she took up to the attic, where it became a forgotten memory. Woodman's poem describes the rest of the dream:

She dreamed a voice told her,
 "Go to the attic and find the black box."
 Still dreaming, she found it
 and slipped her hand in.
 She gently lifted out a bird,
 tiny, skeletal, starving.
 Stricken, she wept
 for this bird she had loved as a child
 and then forgotten.
 Her tears changed its body
 into a radiant small boy who said,
 "But I only wanted to sing my song."

Her dream had a profound effect on me and, judging from the silence in the room, the entire audience.

"But I only wanted to sing my song." Is this not all any of us want to do in our lives? Sing our song? Sing our song without restraint? Without violence, hatred and abuse? When you reflect on life from the perspective that each and every living being, like you, just wants to sing their song, that's the start to building compassion for yourself and all sentient beings.

Welcome to the Special Edition of Mental Fitness Magazine. We are honoured to present to you His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso, the world's foremost Buddhist leader. He has travelled extensively to speak in favour of ecumenical understanding, kindness and compassion, respect for our environment, and most of all, world peace.

"Love and insight work cooperatively to bring about enlightenment, like the two wings of a bird."

Love and Peace,
 Ute Lawrence

U. Lawrence



*His Holiness the
XIVth Dalai Lama,
Robert Paul, Ph.D (right) and
Geshe Lobsang Negi, Ph.D (left)*

EMORY-TIBET PROGRAM STRENGTHENS THE POWER OF COMPASSION

By Susan M. Hunter

I**N A WORLD RIDDLED WITH SEEMINGLY UNENDING VIOLENCE AND ABUSE,** fear and hatred, there are signs that human beings can nurture their natural, positive emotions to correct course through meditation practice and compassion training.

Case in point is the Cognitively-Based Compassion Training (CBCT) program within the Emory-Tibet Partnership, a multi-dimensional initiative founded in 1998 by His Holiness the XIVth Dalai Lama, Robert Paul, Ph.D, former Dean of Emory College, Emory University, Atlanta, and Geshe Lobsang Negi, Ph.D.

This unique alliance brings together the foremost scientific contributions of the Western scholastic tradition and the Tibetan Buddhist sciences of mind and healing.

CBCT was developed by Geshe Lobsang Tenzin Negi, Ph.D., Director of the Emory-Tibet Partnership, and Co-Director of the Emory-Tibet Science Initiative and the Emory Collaborative for Contemplative Studies. CBCT has proven effective in enhancing individual physiological and psychological fitness and health as well as improving social issues of human connection and survival.

“The Western tradition of modern science,” says Geshe Lobsang, “is a very important form of knowledge today, especially as it relates to the mind and body. At the same time, tremendous knowledge about mental fitness, mental health and mental enrichment resides in the Buddhist tradition, a very rich tradition and little explored through the scientific lens—until now. That’s where our partnership saw the possibility of uniting our two traditions for a more complete understanding of human nature.”

The vision for CBCT grew out of a mental health crisis on campus in 2004 with alarming cases of depression and student suicide. One of Geshe Lobsang’s students, Molly Harrington, was convinced that a program that draws on meditative practices could be helpful. Charles Raison, PhD, formerly at Emory, was also doing research on the wellness effects of meditation at the time.

“With funding from Dean Paul,” says Geshe Lobsang, “we created a research study using Compassion Meditation to hopefully reduce the biomarkers for depression.” The five-semester study with Emory freshmen began in 2005. The class met for an hour and 15 minutes for six weeks. Students were introduced to basic principles of Compassion Meditation and encouraged to practice meditation outside of class. The results proved that the effects of the study were beneficial for “high-practice” participants (students who engaged in Compassion Meditation practices outside of class). Compassion Meditation made a difference in lowering two specific markers for psychosocial stress: IL-6, an immune cell related to inflammation and stress and the stress hormone cortisol.

What began as Compassion Meditation research broadened and evolved into the Cognitively-Based Compassion Training (CBCT) program to expand the base of participants. The training uses the lojong tradition of Tibetan Buddhism but rendered into secular form for use by individuals of any, or no, religious inclination. The term lojong means “mind training” or “thought transformation” and refers to a systematic cognitive practice of gradually training the mind in compassion until altruism becomes spontaneous.

The adult CBCT program is an eight-week intervention that meets for two hours a week. Each session contains pedagogical material presented by the instructors, a guided meditation of 20 to 30 minutes and group discussion, with subjects being asked to meditate daily for the duration of the program using guided meditation recordings. The CBCT program aims to help practitioners progressively cultivate other-centered thoughts and behaviors while overcoming maladaptive, self-focused thoughts and behaviors by moving systematically through eight sequential steps.

LOJONG

Lojong is based on the view that self-centered thinking and behavior cause suffering for oneself and others, while other-centered, altruistic thoughts, emotions and behaviors ultimately benefit both oneself and others. Compassion is the heartfelt wish that others be free from suffering and the readiness to act on their behalf. It arises from a deep sense of endearment for others, coupled with empathy for, and sensitivity to, their pain. This empathy arises both from a sense of closeness or connectedness to others as well as recognition of the causes of their and one’s own suffering.

- 1 Developing attention and stability of mind through focused attention training.
- 2 Cultivating insight into the nature of mental experience.
- 3 Cultivating self-compassion.
- 4 Developing equanimity.
- 5 Developing appreciation and gratitude.
- 6 Developing affection and empathy.
- 7 Realizing aspirational compassion.
- 8 Realizing active compassion.



The beneficial results of CBCT led to a large-scale NIH-funded study, Compassion and Attention Longitudinal Meditation (CALM), comparing the effects of differing protocols: Compassion Meditation, Attention Meditation protocol and a class on Health Education. The team is starting the next round in the study, a two-hour-a-week class within a five-year study of 200+ randomized, healthy adults in Atlanta.

In early 2009, the team piloted a project in the foster care system in Atlanta. Geshe Lobsang, Charles Raison, Brooke Dodson-Lavelle and Brendan Ozawa-de Silva piloted a compassion meditation program for youth in the foster care system. The program trained six girls (ages 13-16) in engaged compassion as a means for developing inner resilience and building stronger, healthier relationships.

“School can be tense for kids,” says Brooke, “and some kids don’t have the tools they need to turn around. This program helped. There were many powerful moments and connections between the girls. One girl said, ‘I fought every day with my math teacher and one day I walked in and saw him as someone like me. I didn’t scream back at him and I’m passing math now.’ Another girl said, ‘I don’t know what you have done to me. I saw a man who dropped a \$20 bill and you know I wanted to go shopping with it. But I picked that money up and I ran to that man and I gave it to him.’”

The demand for CBCT continues to grow. The team is starting a pilot program with **CHRIS Kids**, with adolescent boys from two group foster homes and the foster care staff. “We hope to build a CBCT staff program,” says Brooke, “similar to our teacher training program.”

The success of this pilot has led to ongoing studies investigating the effects of compassion

training in this population. In 2010 the Georgia Department of Health and Human Services and the Center for Disease Control (CDC) in Atlanta funded a randomized, wait-list control trial of CBCT for 72 foster children, entitled “A Study of Cognitively-Based Compassion Training (CBCT) to Enhance Health and Well-Being in Adolescents in Foster Care in Metropolitan Atlanta.”

The study, the results of which have not yet been published, examined the efficacy of this training to reduce emotional reactivity, psychosocial stress and behavioral problems. The methods employed and the results of these pilot programs are described in *Ozawa-de Silva and Dodson-Lavelle* (2011).



Paideia School in Atlanta

CBCT protocol was also piloted in 2009 among elementary school children (ages five to eight) in the Paideia School in Atlanta. This program followed the same conceptual sequence as the adult program but with age-appropriate modifications. Classes met twice per week for 25 to 30 minutes during the normal school day. Class began with a short meditation practice and a brief overview or introduction to the week’s topic followed by an activity, story or game to facilitate learning and student engagement. More information on the ways in which CBCT was adapted for children is described in *Ozawa-de Silva and Dodson-Lavelle* (2011).

On the basis of this pilot program for young elementary school children, the team received a grant from Emory University to run a study using an eight-week long intervention in the 2011-2012 school year at the Paideia School in Atlanta, to evaluate the effects of CBCT

on pro-social behavior, bullying, social exclusion, stereotyping and bias in collaboration with Dr. Philippe Rochat and Erin Robbins, both of Emory University. The team has been invited to offer a CBCT program for students at Morningside Elementary School, a public school in Atlanta.



Dr. Nadine Kaslow



Dr. Barbara Patterson

The team is exploring the efficacy of CBCT as an adjunctive treatment for trauma. In May 2010 researchers from Emory University and the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention field-tested CBCT in Kosovo to investigate its potential to heal the trauma of war. Members of the broader research team at Emory University, including Dr. Nadine Kaslow and Dr. Barbara Patterson, are also investigating the efficacy of CBCT among suicide-attempters at a local hospital in Atlanta and among trauma survivors in Kosovo, and have also begun to explore its application in early-onset Alzheimer's patients. More research needs to be done to determine CBCT's therapeutic safety and applicability.

Recent requests for CBCT have multiplied and diversified. To sustain the momentum, the team is inaugurating a graduate program to train peers who were in the foster program's CBCT class. In addition, the team was recently approached to run a program in San Diego for returning veterans with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), to design a CBCT intervention for HIV patients under treatment in a downtown Atlanta clinic and to include the CBCT program on the Emory campus within the student counseling office.

*For more information of CBCT's research efforts,
visit www.tibet.emory.edu/cbct*

"I have long believed in and advocated a dialogue and cross-fertilization between science and spirituality, as both are essential for enriching human life and alleviating suffering on both individual and global levels. The Emory-Tibet Science Initiative has a unique opportunity to fulfill this need."

*– His Holiness the XIVth
Dalai Lama
Presidential
Distinguished Professor,
Emory University*

Modern science is validating compassion as an essential human value. Cultivated to its full potential, compassion has the power to redirect lives, on an individual level and on a societal scale. Today, hardcore research scientists like Frans de Waal, a primatologist at Emory, are even testing the original position regarding survival, revealing that empathy and compassion can override aggression and dominance and may be the key elements for the survival of the human species. They may be redefining the definition of the “fittest.”

In the wake of the recent outbreaks of violence, including the mass shooting in Newtown, Connecticut, U.S., commentators, experts and witnesses are saying that our society is going through a widespread lack of empathy and dearth of compassion. At Emory, the basis of CBCT is that both of these basic human qualities are trainable traits within each of us. “We can cultivate them,” says Geshe Lobsang. “We can offer our society the compassion and empathy it seeks. We can change our hearts.”

The Cognitively-Based Compassion Training program within the Emory-Tibet Science Initiative is proving that the objective forces of Western science and the contemplative Eastern practices of the mind and body, when combined, are restorative, creative and promising for better health for all humankind.

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Dr. Negi, a former monk, was born in Kinnaur, a small Himalayan kingdom adjoining Tibet. He began his monastic training at The Institute of Buddhist Dialectics and continued his education at Drepung Loseling Monastery in south India, where he received his Geshe Lharampa degree, the highest academic degree granted in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, in 1994. Dr. Negi completed his Ph.D. at Emory University in 1999; his interdisciplinary dissertation centered on traditional Buddhist and contemporary Western approaches to emotions and their impact on wellness. He is the Founder and Director of the American seat of Tibet’s foremost monastery, Drepung Loseling Monastery, in Atlanta, GA.

*– Geshe Lobsang Tenzin Negi, PhD; Director, Emory-Tibet Partnership
Co-Director of both the Emory-Tibet Science Initiative and the Emory Collaborative for
Contemplative Studies; Senior Lecturer, Emory Department of Religion*

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IN THE SECOND ISSUE OF MENTAL FITNESS MAGAZINE...

**WE ARE HONOURED TO
PRESENT TO YOU HIS HOLINESS
THE 14TH DALAI LAMA**

This Special Edition is the ultimate resource for compassion-based mental fitness and wellness. Featuring The Dalai Lama's wisdom, his Emory-Tibet Partnership — where leading-edge science meets the power of compassion — and self-help tools for stress, body and mind, health and happiness from neuroscience, leading experts and much more.

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