



Compassion Development Dyads

August 2014. Dr. Daniel Martin; Dr. Yotam Heineberg

OVERVIEW

The **Compassion Development Dyad (CDD)** is an online compassion development tool that leverages science, social networks and interpersonal interactions to enable participants to develop compassion for self and others in a safe, supportive and measurable environment. Participants learn about each other by answering specific questions, discussing and taking actions to further their own compassion for others and for themselves. This happens while learning and applying other critical elements of personal and social well-being, such as mindfulness, connection with core values, emotional literacy, growth mindsets, behavioral engagement and addressing potential blocks to giving and receiving kindness. The tool can also match participants for you with an engaging, web and

app-based system to motivate both parties intrinsically and extrinsically. **The CDD can be implemented in synergistic ways with other community systems (e.g. network of compassionate schools, offices or hospitals/clinics); in order to enhance psychosocial well-being, confidence and social networks.**

The CDD can be offered with many different points of emphasis. For example, in the school/academic context, it can focus on issues of burn out, stress and empathy fatigue, utilized as a tool which offers psycho-education and peer support for students, teachers, administrators, and parents. Dimensions of personal wellbeing will be weaved together with synergistically enhancing systems functioning towards increased productivity.

BENEFITS

Compassion is strongly correlated with improved immune system, physical wellbeing, and improved psychological functioning (Pace et al. 2008; Gilbert, McEwan, Matos, Ravis, 2010). Being compassionate towards others has many health benefits such as lower systolic and diastolic blood pressure and lower cortisol (Cosley, McCoy, Saslow, Epel, 2010). Cohen and Wills (1985) suggest that compassion may serve as a buffer against stress. Importantly, compassion facilitates workplace performance by lowering levels of litigation, easing stress, and

facilitating cooperation. While self-compassion and global self-esteem are highly correlated, self-compassion has a host of additional benefits (Neff and Vonk). For example, self-compassionate people tend to have higher resilience and are better able to cope with failure as they tend to be driven by a desire to learn (Neff, Hsieh, & Dejitterat, 2005). CDD is most heavily reliant on **Professor Paul Gilbert's** framework of **Compassion Focused Therapy**, adapted into a psycho-educational format, fitting for non-clinical populations.

PRACTICE

A Walkthrough of the CDD: The partner meetings take place online, via video-chat. Participants go through 8 predefined (but flexible) sessions of compassion development assignments, where relevant questions and discussion points are offered to complete as a team. Both partners complete an online application, agree to an eight session commitment, collaborate toward mutually accepted goals, tracking accomplishments and receive credit for each achievement. Each session consists of pre discussion psycho-

educational reading (approx. 3-6 pages) and short self-directed exercises, leading into partner discussions. CDD concludes at 2 months with new opportunities. See below for outline. Moreover, follow-up sessions beyond the first 8 week modules could become possible per interest, offering users more structured discussions, focused on tracking values and behaviors, linking them with concrete markers of well-being, and the benefits of a compassionate lifestyle.

1. Introduction, themes (e.g. educational leadership) and practicing empathy/active listening skills
2. Becoming mindful of our values, aware of our lives, and connected to our best
3. Acknowledging our tricky brain, dealing with threat, and moving towards soothing
4. Becoming mindful of our mindset; growth into an attitude of self-reassurance
5. The Compassionate self, and the three directions of kindness; Receiving
6. The three directions of kindness - Practicing Self-Compassion
7. The three directions of kindness – Practicing Empathy and Compassion for others
8. Consolidation: What have we taken from the program and how will it impact our life.

ADMINISTRATION

CDD is easy to manage independently. Features such as automatic matching, waitlists, constant feedback, and prevention of problem participants are embedded in the program. Data is provided in easy to analyze spreadsheet. CDD can be used to facilitate compassion development relationships between parents, teachers, administration and between community business, associations and

organizations, with customizability to meet the needs of compassion fatigue and stress for teachers (as teaching requires enormous emotional labor). Organizations can use the data generated for employee support, accreditation, marketing, corporate social responsibility and recruitment.

RESULTS

Pilot results from pre/post tests for the Compassion Development Dyads (CDD) with 78 MBA and undergrad business students established **significant improvements** for the following psychological dimensions:

For both Women and Men:

1. Compassion for others
2. Subjective Happiness
3. Leadership
4. Acceptance and Action
5. Fear of Compassion for Others

For Men:

1. Self-Compassion
2. Forms of Self-Criticism/
Attacking and Self
Reassurance Scale
3. Functions of Self-Criticism/
Attacking Scale
4. Fear of Compassion from
Others

For Women:

1. Subjective Happiness
2. Leadership
3. Acceptance and Action
4. Fear of Compassion for
Others

93.68 %

Answered **yes** to the question:
Are you glad you participated in
this program?

93.68 %

Answered **yes** to the question:
Would you recommend this
program to a friend?

PARTICIPANT SAMPLE COMMENTS

“The program gave me a very positive and caring outlook I never had before. Learning about empathy and compassion was truly an eye opener for me. It taught me to be grateful for the good and bad that comes in my life, as they are part of who I am. As a result, I am more confident when I talk to strangers. People I may not know are human just like me and have feelings and emotions. I can now easily talk to managers and

superiors at my place of work. These managers started out like me in lower positions and have lessons to share. Success doesn’t always come from money but strength and taking risks. People always tell me I am always smiling and thinking positive. Due to this program my stress has gone down and my energy/positive outlook have gone up.”

CONCLUSIONS

Overall, it is feasible to significantly increase compassion for self and others, happiness, positive leadership capacities, acceptance and action as well as diminish self-criticism and fear of receiving from, and giving compassion to others for both men and women, through an eight week intervention in a scalable web/app based package. As our pilot evidence supports, **CDD shows the potential to be comparatively effective, yet more efficient than current programs that are**

prohibitively expensive, not scalable and require face to face expert mediated delivery.

Importantly, the data can be linked to other systems to establish the impact of the intervention on related concerns such as stress, resilience, educators’ functioning, wellbeing, turnover, worker compensation claims, employee engagement, grades, parental functioning, drop-out rates, recidivism and other system outcomes.

RESEARCHERS

Dr. Daniel E. Martin

Collaborating Scientist at Stanford CCARE. Published journals: Personnel Review, Human Organization, Ethics & Behavior, and the Journal of Applied Psychology. His research data can be linked to other systems to establish the impact of the intervention on concerns such as stress, resilience, educators’ functioning, wellbeing, turnover, worker compensation claims, employee engagement, grades, parental functioning, drop-out rates, recidivism & other system outcomes.

Dr. Yotam Heineberg

Collaborating Scientist at Stanford CCARE. Dr. Heineberg’s passion has been finding effective methods for healing the cycle of violence with compassion and scalable technology based interventions to increase wellbeing and compassion. He works with Dr. Daniel Martin to develop additional technology tools to increase wellbeing and pro-sociality in a variety of settings, ranging from clinical populations, to school systems and workplace environments.