



Mindfulness-Based Compassionate Living

International Online MBCL Teacher-Training Programme

“Try-out” with founding teacher Erik van den Brink, MD

***6x Wednesday in 2021
20 and 27 January; 10 and 17 February; 3 and 10 March***

What is Mindfulness-Based Compassionate Living (MBCL)?

MBCL is a mindfulness-based 8-week programme that supports the development and training of (self-) compassion to enhance physical, emotional and relational health and well-being. It is suitable as a follow-on course for other mindfulness-based programmes (MBSR, MBCT or equivalent). Developed by Erik van den Brink and Frits Koster, MBCL is grounded in science and in the decades-long experience of its two founders. Erik van den Brink brings to MBCL his experience as a psychiatrist and psychotherapist, expert on mindfulness in mental health settings and long-time meditator. Frits Koster integrates his work as a Vipassana teacher, a trainer in MBSR & MBCT, his expertise in Buddhist psychology and his work as a mindfulness trainer for mental health professionals.

MBCL incorporates scientific insights, exercises and teachings gleaned from other compassion training methods as well as contemplative practices. 'It was originally developed in the ambulant mental health setting for clients who benefited from MBSR/MBCT and needed more support, particularly those with tendencies to be harsh with themselves, finding it difficult to receive kindness. MBCL is not aimed at specific diagnostic groups but - like MBSR - addressing unhealthy reactions and patterns contributing to suffering in general. So, clients vulnerable to depression, anxiety, burnout, chronic pain or fatigue, and various emotional and relational difficulties can all benefit. It soon turned out that the MBCL programme is also very helpful to professional care givers, being vulnerable to symptoms of burnout. In recent years, MBCL has rapidly expanded beyond the mental health sector and is found to be helpful for anyone, professionals and non-professionals, having to live in a frantic world and wishing to deepen mindfulness with 'heartfulness'.

Why online?

The Covid-19 pandemic has enabled us to gain experience with working online. Despite some limitations, many have been surprised by the depth of teaching, practice and sharing online

programmes can offer. The pandemic has increased our awareness of our vulnerabilities and the need to take care of ourselves, each other, and the planet. It makes sense to expand the possibilities of online Teacher Trainings, which are kinder for the environment and for many participants who would otherwise have to travel great distances. It also provides richer opportunities to learn in groups of people with different cultural backgrounds.

RESEARCH

There is an increasing amount of research showing the beneficial effects of compassion-based interventions for our physical, emotional and relational health. Supportive evidence for MBCL has been published in various scientific publications (Bartels-Velthuis et al. 2016; Krieger et al. 2016; Schuling et al. 2017; Ondrejková et al. 2020). Two recent controlled trials showed significant health benefits in a clinical population with recurrent depression, who followed MBCL after MBCT (Schuling et al., 2020) and a non-clinical population who followed an online adaptation of MBCL (Krieger et al. 2019).

Learning Objectives of the online MBCL TT Programme

- To experience the main exercises of MBCL in more depth beyond the foundation course level.
- To thoroughly review the content of the 8 sessions of an MBCL course.
- To have a basic understanding of the scientific foundation of compassion training and the theoretical background in western and Buddhist psychology.
- To review and develop the basic attitudes necessary for working with compassion-focused methods.
- To have an understanding for which clients compassion training can be helpful.
- To deepen the practice of mindfulness and clarify its relationship to compassion training.
- Deepening the understanding of the structure and content of MBCL.
- Learning how to teach the curriculum and how to guide MBCL exercises.
- Introduction to leading inquiry following exercises.
- Developing skills of how to present the background theory on compassion training.
- Deepening one's personal experience of compassion exercises.

Content of the Online MBCL TT Programme

- The validation of pain and suffering.
- How our brain has evolved to help us survive and how compassion is a necessity (not a luxury), for our well-being and survival.
- Insight into the three basic emotion regulation and motivation systems
- How mental images and patterns can bring emotion-regulation systems out of balance and how compassionate imagery can restore the balance.

- The psychological expressions of fight, flight & freeze: self-hatred, self-isolation and over-identification; and their antidotes: self-kindness, common humanity & mindfulness.
- ‘Tend & befriend’ as a fourth reaction to stress in addition to fight, flight & freeze.
- Compassionately relating to resistance, desire and inner patterns; self-conscious emotions shame and self-blame; the inner critic and inner helper.
- Developing the compassion mode with its attributes of care for well-being and relief of suffering, sensitivity to needs, sympathy, empathy, tolerance of distress and non-judgmental awareness.
- The balanced cultivation of the four heart qualities: compassion, loving kindness, joy and equanimity.
- Compassion in action and practical ethics.
- The structure of MBCL’s 8 sessions will be presented in detail from the teaching perspective.
- The content and structure of compassion-focused exercises will be reviewed and practiced.
- Participants will have more practice guiding MBCL exercises as well as leading compassionate inquiry sessions.
- Background knowledge and meta-perspectives for MBCL trainers, including:
 - Evolutionary perspectives
 - High and low routes toward compassion
 - The plasticity of the brain
 - The physiology of the breath
 - Individual and gender differences
 - Different attachment styles
 - MBCL and psychological problems, indications/contra-indications
 - MBCL in private practice settings
 - Content and attitude in communication
 - The differences and common ground between psychotherapy and MBCL training.

Prerequisites for participation in the Online MBCL TT Programme

The MBCL TT Programme is currently taking place in various countries in Europe and offered as *postgraduate education* for professionals already familiar with mindfulness practice and mindfulness-based work. All applicants are required to have participated *at least one* of the following experiential offerings:

- an MBCL Foundation Course or an MBCL-retreat (minimum 3 days) -
- an eight-week MBCL training, physical or online, as a participant, with a qualified MBCL teacher;

See www.compassionateliving.info or www.mbcl.org for different options.

Furthermore:

- Participants must have adequate communication skills in English.
- Participants must be familiar with using the online ZOOM video platform and willing to engage in mindful inquiry into their experiences by online sharing in larger and smaller groups. This includes interpersonal work in two’s or three’s in breakout rooms.

- Participants are responsible for ensuring a good internet connection and a suitable PC, laptop or other device with adequate video and sound systems. Use of a smart phone is not recommended.
- Participants should be willing to spend a minimum of 14 hours of their own time to do preparatory work in-between sessions, individually and in small groups. They should also allow for reading time and individual practice time.
- PLEASE NOTE: This *first-time-ever online* MBCL TT is intended for mindfulness teachers who are committed to explore the possibilities of working online and accept the imperfections inherent to a pilot training. They are expected to give feedback to the tutor to help the online format grow further.

Requirements for the Online MBCL TT Programme

Two Paths ...

EITHER:

the participant must be qualified as a mindfulness teacher (MBSR or MBCT, or equivalent, e.g. Breathworks) from a recognized training institute. On successful completion of the MBCL TT Programme, and following a minimum of 3 hours of supervision during teaching MBCL to groups, one can obtain *A-registration* as an MBCL teacher and offer the formal MBCL-programme as an advanced course to participants who completed a basic mindfulness course (MBSR/MBCT/Breathworks).¹

Those who have almost completed their mindfulness teacher training can also apply for the MBCL TT programme. However, they will only obtain their MBCL A-registration following completion of their mindfulness teacher training and full professional registration as a mindfulness teacher.

OR:

the participant may be qualified in a (mental) health or other helping profession without MBSR/MBCT teacher qualification. They should have followed basic training and gained experience in mindfulness-based interventions (e.g. ACT, DBT, MBCT) and/or wish to do the MBCL training to deepen their own practice and their therapeutic or counseling skills with mindfulness-based and compassion-focused interventions.

For this group the minimum requirements are that one has followed an eight-week MBSR/MBCT course and has at least one year regular practice in mindfulness meditation. Those belonging to this group can obtain *B-registration* as a professional who has been trained in guiding exercises and working with material from the MBCL programme and applies this in their own work setting within the ethical guidelines of their profession, individually or in groups. *Please note, one can only register as a formal MBCL-teacher and offer the full MBCL-programme under its name, when one is also a formal MBSR or MBCT teacher.*

¹ This is in line with the Good Practice Guidelines for Mindfulness-Based teaching in the UK. As this is a postgraduate education one is expected to have the professional integrity and responsibility to judge when one is ready to offer MBCL independently. Those who do not feel confident to do so as yet after the TT, are advised to seek further schooling and supervision and/or obtain experience as a co-teacher.

Tutor



Erik van den Brink is psychiatrist/psychotherapist and mindfulness teacher/trainer. He studied medicine in Amsterdam and trained and worked in psychiatry in the UK. From his return to the Netherlands in 1995 until 2015 he worked in the ambulant mental health services in Groningen. Since its founding in 2007, he was involved with the Center for Integrative Psychiatry, an innovative mental health clinic, and he currently works at a psycho-oncological center. He is particularly interested in methods that empower people's self-healing capacity and was one of the pioneers introducing mindfulness-based and compassion focused interventions in mental health services in the North of Holland.

He has a long-standing personal meditation practice and was trained by founding teachers in MBSR/MBCT, Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, Compassion Focused Therapy, Mindful Self-Compassion and Interpersonal Mindfulness. With Frits Koster he developed the MBCL programme and co-authored several publications. He is a frequent guest teacher at mindfulness training institutes across Europe.

Website: www.mbcl.org.

Literature

- Required reading: Erik van den Brink & Frits Koster (2018). *A Practical Guide to Mindfulness-Based Compassionate Living – Living with heart*. London/New York: Routledge. A self-help guide and workbook to be used by participants of a standard MBCL course.
- Optional reading: Erik van den Brink & Frits Koster (2015): *Mindfulness-Based Compassionate Living – A new training programme to deepen mindfulness with heartfulness*. London/New York: Routledge. A textbook for professionals which includes a middle part with practical guidance taking the reader through the course experientially.

Both books come with downloadable audios and worksheets.

Dates and times

Six Wednesdays: **20 and 27 January; 10 and 17 February; 3 and 10 March 2021**

Teaching times: **9.00 – 12.30 and 14.30-17.30 CET**, including short breaks for self-care.

Time investment

There will be 36 hours of online teaching and a minimum of 14 hours for individual preparation of didactic themes and practice in small groups, and on two occasions an hour of mindful sharing in subgroups with the tutor focusing on one's individual process during the course. In addition, participants are expected to commit themselves to individual practice time and reading time depending on their individual learning needs. The tutor will also be available for individual email contact as required.

Certification

All participants who have participated in at least 33 live teaching hours will receive a certificate of participation after having completed the online TT programme. This does not mean that they are certified teachers of MBCL, only that they have attended the training.

To be certified as an MBCL teacher, they must in addition teach an MBCL course with a minimum of three supervision hours with a qualified MBCL supervisor, within three years' time after having

participated in the online TT programme. Upon receiving the recommendation for registration from the MBCL supervisor the participant can be certified as an MBCL teacher and listed as such on www.compassionateliving.info.

Extra information

- the maximum number of participants is 10 participants. The online programme can take place with a minimum of 6 participants.
- Zoom will be used as an internet application; it will offer interpersonal options, such as breakout rooms, chat and pin-up. This requires a suitable internet connection and a well-functioning device. Technical instruction in the use of ZOOM will not be offered. However, ZOOM provides excellent online tutorials

Costs

Because this TT is a try-out, it is offered at a reduced tuition fee of 600,- Euro per participant, payable at registration.

Registration

Those who wish to register can mail directly to erikvandenbrink@mbcl.nl and request a registration form.