



# **Institute for Mindfulness-Based Approaches**



## **Mindfulness-Based Compassionate Living**

A deepening programme following MBSR or MBCT or Equivalent

### **International Online MBCL Foundation Course 2021**

For mindfulness teachers, health care workers, therapists,  
coaches and other professionals

**with one of the Founders of MBCL**

**Erik van den Brink, MD**

Psychiatrist, Psychotherapist and Mindfulness Trainer

*Organised by the Institute for Mindfulness-Based Approaches (IMA)*

**6x Tuesday: 9, 16, 23 February and 2, 9, 16 March 2021.**

**Time: 9.00-12.30 CET.**



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## **What is Compassion?**

Compassion is the capacity to be sensitive to the suffering of ourselves and others and the willingness to relieve and prevent it (Paul Gilbert, 2014). It is a capacity inherent in all of us but for many reasons does not always come to flourishing. Fortunately, it can be trained, developed and deepened through

practice. Compassion is characterised by kindness and receptivity as well as courage and responsibility. Many believe compassion should be directed towards others rather than ourselves, but self-compassion is not selfish. Research increasingly shows that self-compassion is – like mindfulness – key to mental health and goes hand in hand with greater openness and empathy towards others.

## **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 - addresses unhealthy reactions and patterns contributing to suffering in general. 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'.



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## 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).

### **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 that 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 teaching, 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 across cultures.

### **What does the online MBCL Foundation Course offer?**

This course of six half-days, which is organised by the Institute for Mindfulness-Based Approaches (IMA) with the support of the Mindfulness Network, offers an online alternative to experiential introductions to MBCL in live groups, such as a three-day foundation course or the standard eight-session MBCL course. This course offers a hybrid format of equivalent quality during which participants will experience all key features of the MBCL curriculum, including the main themes and practices.

Themes include: the evolutionary perspective and multi-layered brain; the three basic emotion regulation systems and the value of training our soothing system; expanding the stress theory with the psychological equivalents of fight, flight, freeze and their antidotes of self-kindness, common humanity and mindfulness of suffering; tend and befriend; cultivating a compassionate mind and an inner helper rather than an inner critic; overidentifying and disidentifying; Four Friends for Life: loving kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity.

Practices include: the soothing breathing rhythm, compassionate imagery (safe place, compassionate companion, embodying compassion); relating compassionately to resistance, desire and inner patterns; loving kindness towards ourselves and others; compassionate breathing; a compassionate body scan; walking and moving with kindness; compassionate letter writing; practising sympathetic joy, gratitude, forgiveness and equanimity; informal practices in daily life. During the online course, relevant scientific insights underpinning compassion training will be woven into the teaching.



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## Prerequisites for participation

- Participants are familiar with basic mindfulness practice, preferably by having followed an eight-week mindfulness training (MBSR, MBCT or equivalent). The online programme is not suitable for participants without mindfulness meditation experience.
- Participants have a personal and professional interest in the applications of mindfulness and (self-) compassion. They can be mindfulness teachers, psychologists, doctors, nurses, social workers, therapists, counselors or coaches and related professions.
- Participants are responsible for their own physical and mental health and willing to deepen their self-inquiry by engaging in experiential exercises, to share experiences and engage in mindful dialogue with the teacher and each other; all in an unforced and respectful way.
- The programme will be entirely in English so participants must be able to communicate in the English language.
- Participants must be familiar with using the online ZOOM video platform and be willing to engage in mindful inquiry into their experiences through online sharing in larger and smaller groups. This includes interpersonal work in twos or threes 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 commit themselves to formal home practice of 30-45 minutes daily. They can make use of the downloadable audios and worksheets. In addition, they are expected to read the chapters on the relevant sessions during the course week by week (around 1,5 hours of reading time per week).

Participants are required to purchase the following book in advance:

**Required Reading:** *A Practical Guide to Mindfulness-Based Compassionate Living - Living with Heart* by Erik van den Brink & Frits Koster, with Victoria Norton (Routledge, 2018). A self-help guide and workbook to be used by participants of a standard MBCL course.

**Optional Reading:** *Mindfulness-Based Compassionate Living – A New Training Programme to Deepen Mindfulness with Heartfulness* by Erik van den Brink & Frits Koster (Routledge, 2015). A textbook for professionals that includes a middle section with practical guidance that takes the reader through the course experientially.

Both books come with downloadable audios and worksheets.



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## Learning Objectives

- Participants will have experienced the main exercises of the MBCL programme as a first step to understand their meaning for their personal and professional lives.
- Participants will have a basic understanding of the content, the main themes and relevant scientific background of the MBCL programme.
- Participants will have a basis to further cultivate and deepen (self-) compassion practice for personal and professional benefit and – if they wish to and meet the requirements – to continue with an MBCL Teacher Training.

### PREPARATION FOR MBCL TEACHER TRAINING

#### **THIS ONLINE MBCL FOUNDATION COURSE SATISFIES ONE OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR PARTICIPATING IN THE MBCL TEACHER TRAINING PROGRAM**

MBCL Teacher Training (TT) seminars are increasingly offered in various formats. [Click here](#) for dates, description and prerequisites of the MBCL Teacher Training in different countries. An English-spoken online MBCL TT of six one-day sessions every two weeks will be offered in Spring 2022 by the IMA. [www.institute-for-mindfulness.org/offer/mbcl/mbcl-online-teacher-training](http://www.institute-for-mindfulness.org/offer/mbcl/mbcl-online-teacher-training)

To become an MBCL teacher one should be a certified mindfulness (MBSR or MBCT) teacher. However, many professionals who are not certified mindfulness teachers can benefit from the teacher training to deepen mindfulness-based and compassion-focused interventions and enhance their therapeutic skills in individual or group work.

#### **Dates and time investment:**

- February 9<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> 2021
- Tuesdays 9.00 – 12.30 CET (8.00 – 11.30 am UCT).  
This includes half an hour for short breaks.
- The course will include 18 online teaching hours as well as a minimum of 18 hours of individual practice time and 10 hours of reading time.



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**Erik van den Brink** is a 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 the city of 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](http://www.mbcl.org).

### Literature:

- *A practical guide to Mindfulness-Based Compassionate Living - Living with Heart* by Erik van den Brink & Frits Koster, with Victoria Norton (Routledge, 2018).
- *Mindfulness-Based Compassionate Living - A new training programme to deepen mindfulness with heartfulness* by Erik van den Brink & Frits Koster (Routledge, 2015).

### Practical information:

- Participants will receive a certificate of attendance.
- **Number of participants:** maximum 24, minimum 10
- **Tuition Fee:** Euro 350,- due at the time of registration.



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## Terms of Registration

Places in the trainings will be assigned in the order in which registration is received. If the seminar is full, you will be notified and placed on a waiting list.

## Terms of Cancellation

If you have to withdraw from the seminar, the following terms will apply:

### **Withdrawal up to 4 weeks before the seminar begins:**

We will refund any payments made minus a **Euro 40.-** fee for early withdrawal, plus any bank wire fees for transfers outside the EU.

**Withdrawal within 4 weeks of the beginning of the seminar:** The course fee is non-refundable. We will, however, try to fill your space from a waiting list, if available, but there is no guarantee this is possible. If we do fill your space, we will refund your money minus a **Euro 40.-** fee for early withdrawal, plus any bank wire fees for transfers outside the EU.

## Technical Equipment

Participants must ensure that they have good internet connection and a PC, laptop or other device with adequate video and sound systems. Smart phones are unsuitable for this type of online teaching. Technical instruction for ZOOM or the use of the equipment will not be available. However, ZOOM provides excellent online tutorials.

