

Mindfulness-Based Compassionate Living International Online MBCL Teacher Training

Orientation: Friday 17th October 2025 from 19.00-21.00 CET

Module 1: Saturday 18th - Monday 20th October

Module 2: Friday 24th - Sunday 26th October

each day from 9.00-13.00 and 14.30-17.30 CET

with

Frits Koster

Meditation Teacher, Author and Senior Mindfulness Trainer

Co-founder of MBCL

and

Jana Willms

Psychologist, Physiotherapist, Senior Mindfulness Trainer

Co-author of the German MBCL Workbook

Organised by Institute for Mindfulness-Based Approaches (IMA)

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 after having followed a basic mindfulness course such as 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 health care professionals and other professionals working with people (e.g. in education, as a coach or in management), 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'.

MBCL is acknowledged by the British Association of Mindfulness-Based Approaches (BAMBA), the Dutch Vereniging Mindfulness-Based Trainers Nederland (VMBN) and the EAMBA European Associations for Mindfulness, as a 'normal dose follow-up' Mindfulness-Based Programme (MBP) – for those who have followed a foundational MBP such as MBSR and MBCT before.

Research

There is an increasing amount of research showing the beneficial effects of compassion-based interventions for our physical, emotional and relational health. The MBCL programme itself has shown beneficial effects in a growing number of studies – in clinical and non-clinical settings, on location and online, in controlled and uncontrolled, quantitative and qualitative research.

Three Randomized Controlled Trials (RCT's) have now been published, studying:

- MBCL after MBCT among people with recurrent depression (Schuling et al., 2020).
- An MBCL online programme among people with high levels of self-criticism (Krieger et al., 2019).
- A brief online intervention with MBCL exercises among students (Ondrejková et al., 2020).

In summary, research up to date confirms that after an MBCL intervention:

- mindfulness, self-compassion, quality of life and resilience increase;
- depression, self-criticism, anxiety, and stress levels decrease.

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 wellbeing 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 wellbeing 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
 - Content and attitude in communication
 - MBCL and psychological problems, indications/contra-indications
 - MBCL in private practice settings
 - 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 in only one of the following experiential offerings:

- An MBCL Foundation Course (minimum 3 days), residentially or online - see www.mbcl-international.net for different options.
- An 8-week MBCL training as a participant with a qualified MBCL teacher, residentially or online.
- An experiential MBCL Retreat - see www.institute-for-mindfulness.org and/or www.mbcl-international.net
- 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 11 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.
- Participants are required to study 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 which includes a middle part with practical guidance taking the reader through the course experientially. Both books come with downloadable audios and worksheets.

MBCL Teaching Qualification

Two Paths ...

1. 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.

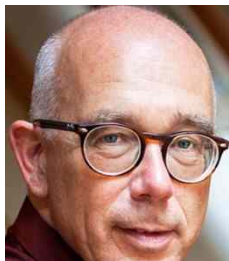
2. OR:

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 counselling 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.

Tutors



Frits Koster is a meditation teacher and a qualified MBSR, MBCT and IMP teacher. He was a Buddhist monk between 1982-1988 and during this period he studied Buddhist psychology at various monasteries in South East Asia. He has written several books on this subject, some of which have been translated into English. He is affiliated as a trainer at various mindfulness teacher training institutes across Europe. With Erik van den Brink he developed the Mindfulness-Based Compassionate Living (MBCL). Together they wrote several books on MBCL, these books are translated into various languages. With his wife Jetty Heynekamp he teaches meditation retreats internationally; together with Victoria Norton they edited 'Mindful Communication' (Routledge, 2023). With Zohair Elabd he is currently teaching a mindfulness based training programme focussed called Deepening Mindfulness & Mindful Communication, with Joyce Cordus he has developed a Mindfulness-Based Training in Forgiveness (MBTF). See:

www.compassionateliving.info and/or www.fritskoster.com



Jana Willms is a psychologist, certified MBSR, MBCT and MBCL senior teacher based in Hamburg, Germany. Together with the founders of MBCL, Frits Koster and Erik van den Brink, she teaches MBCL at the Institute for Mindfulness Based Approaches (IMA), where she also offers Mindfulness-Based Supervision for MBCL and MBSR teachers. She has been practicing Vipassana and Metta meditation since 2000 and teaches mindfulness since 2008. She is a co-author of the German book Mitgefühl

üben. Das große MBCL Praxisbuch (Practicing Compassion: The MBCL Handbook), published in 2020. She has lived in the USA and speaks English fluently. Before earning a degree in psychology, she trained and worked as a physiotherapist. See: www.achtsamkeit-willms.de

Literature

- Erik van den Brink & Frits Koster (2015): *Mindfulness-Based Compassionate Living - A new training programme to deepen mindfulness with heartfulness*. London/New York: Routledge.
- Erik van den Brink & Frits Koster (2018). *A Practical Guide to Mindfulness-Based Compassionate Living – Living with heart*. London/New York: Routledge.

Dates and times

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Time investment

There will be 44 hours of online teaching (six full days and an orientation session) and a minimum of 11 hours of self-arranged study, of which 5 online meetings of 1.5 hours for practice in small groups, 1.5 hours for preparation of didactic themes, and on two occasions 1 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 tutors will also be available for individual email contact as required.

Acknowledgement of Participation in the MBCL TT Programme

All participants who have completed at least 40 formal, teacher-led training hours will receive a document that confirms their participation in the MBCL Online TT Programme. If participants miss teaching hours due to unforeseen circumstances, they must seek advice with the tutor and agree on adequate compensation.

Certification as an MBCL teacher

Those who

1. fulfil the requirements for certification as outlined in the section "MBCL Teaching Qualification,"
2. have taught a certification course within three years of completing the online TT programme,
3. completed a minimum of three supervision hours for the certification course with an approved

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Description for International MBCL Online TT Programme
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- MBCL supervisor, and
4. receive the supervisor's recommendation for certification,
- will be listed on www.mbcl-international.net and on the website of the IMA.

Additional information

- The maximum number of participants is 18 participants. The online programme can take place with a minimum of 9 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.

Course Fee

995,- Euro (Payable at the time of registration)

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.
- Withdrawal within 4 weeks of the seminar: The course fee is non-refundable. If we are able to fill your space from a waiting list, your course fee will be returned minus a Euro 40.- administrative charge.

ZOOM Link

The International Online MBCL teacher training programme will be taught using the online ZOOM video platform. 5 days before the seminar is to start, participants will receive a ZOOM Link via Email.

A registration form is available for downloading here:

www.institute-for-mindfulness.org/offer/mbcl/mbcl-online-teacher-training-3

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.