

CBCT[®] Theory of Change

from contemplative science and neuroscience perspectives

Timothy Harrison, Associate Director for CBCT[®]

Seoul International Meditation Expo, Dongguk University, Korea
June 17, 2022, 2 pm – 3 pm Korea (1 am – 2 am Eastern US)



Center for Contemplative Science
and Compassion-Based Ethics

EMORY UNIVERSITY

THE EMORY COMPASSION CENTER



Center for Contemplative Science
and Compassion-Based Ethics

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VISION

A compassionate and ethical world for all.

MISSION

To promote human flourishing by developing educational programs, facilitating dialogue, and engaging in research.

THE EMORY COMPASSION CENTER



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CBCT [®] – Cognitively-Based Compassion Training

A research-based series of contemplative exercises to cultivate tools for self-awareness, well-being, and compassion in adults and young adults.

SEE Learning [®] – Social Emotional and Ethical Learning

A comprehensive framework and curriculum to teach awareness and compassion to children in educational settings across the globe.

ETSI - Emory-Tibet Science Initiative

Translating and teaching western science in Tibetan monastic institutions.

Higher Education

Emory University academic offerings.

Research

Scientific investigations of body and mind.

UNDERSTANDING COMPASSION

THREE ASPECTS

Affective

Feeling of warm-heartedness or closeness

Cognitive

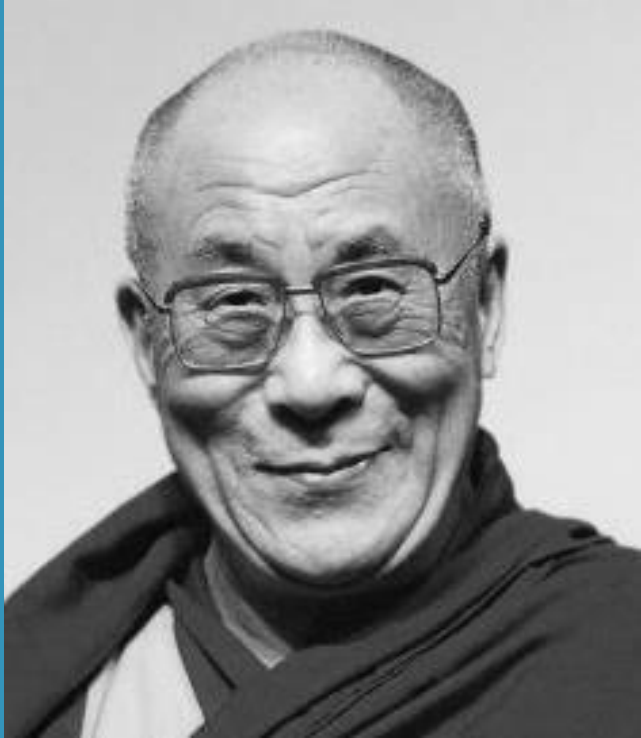
Awareness or understanding of someone's suffering

Motivational

Desire or wish to alleviate the suffering

a **warm-hearted concern** that unfolds when we witness the suffering of others and feel motivated to relieve it

EXPANDING COMPASSION



His Holiness the Dalai Lama
and Rasmus Hougaard
Harvard Business Review

The ultimate source of a happy life is warm-heartedness. Even animals display some sense of compassion. When it comes to human beings, compassion can be combined with intelligence. Through the application of reason, compassion can be extended to all seven billion human beings.

ORIGINS of CBCT®



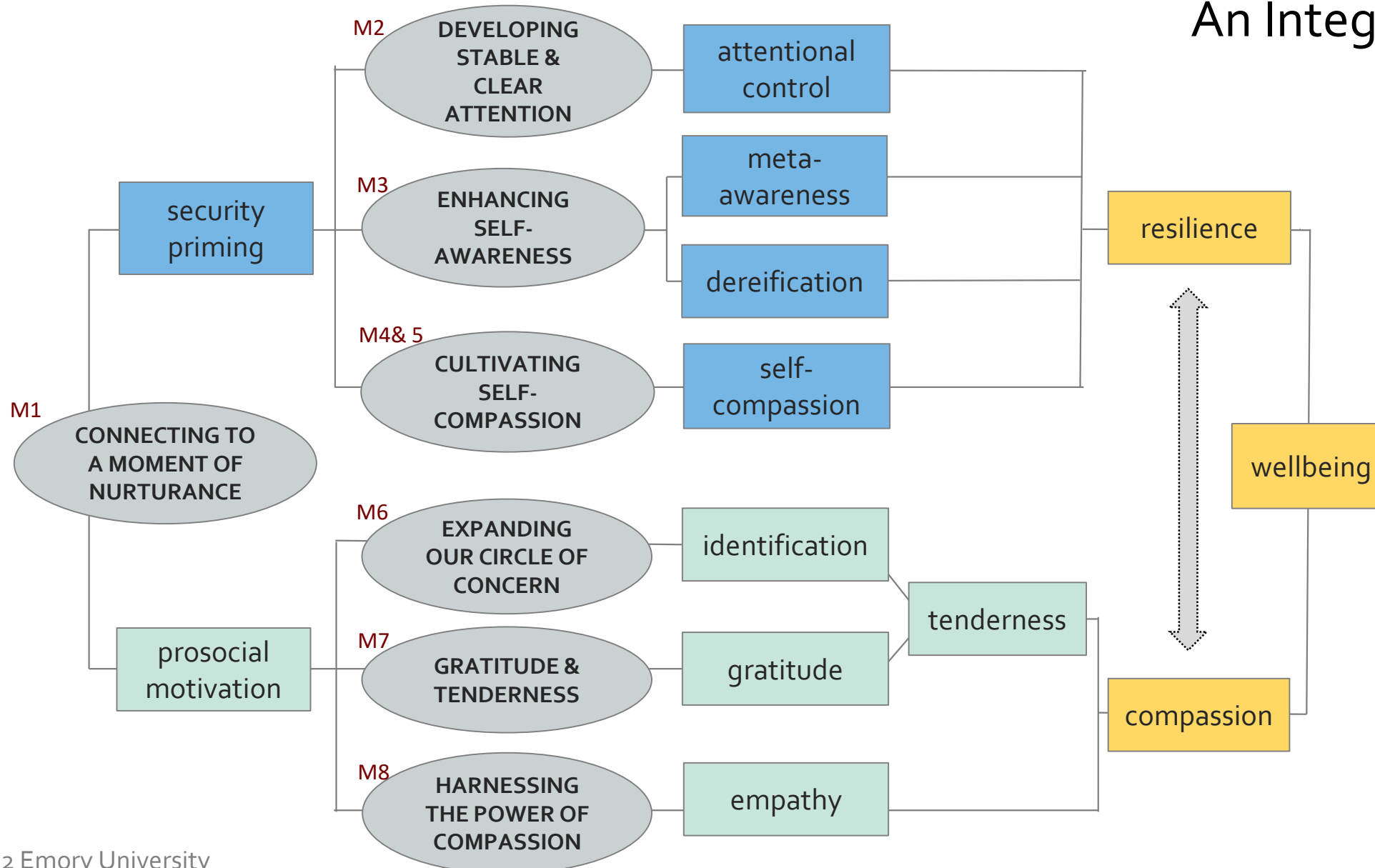
My hope is that someday society will see compassion to be as valuable and essential to a good life as clean water.

Prof. Lobsang Tenzin Negi

- Developed as a protocol in 2005 for research at Emory University by **Lobsang Tenzin Negi**, PhD, former monk and Executive Director of the Center for Contemplative Science and Compassion-Based Ethics.
- Drawn from the ***lo jong*** (“mind training”) tradition of Indo-Tibetan Buddhism, combined with insights emerging from evolutionary psychology, neurobiology of emotions, and social sciences.
- Secularized so that the practices are available to individuals of any – or no - faith tradition.

CBCT[®] TRAINING COMPASSION

An Integrative Model



Marcia Ash, Timothy Harrison, Melissa Pinto, Ralph DiClemente, Lobsang Tenzin Negi. (2019). A model for cognitively based compassion training: theoretical underpinnings and proposed mechanisms. *Social Theory & Health*.

CBCT RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

1. Pace et al., *Psychoneuroendocrinology*, 2008
2. Pace, Negi, Raison, et al. *Psychoneuroendocrinology*, July 2, 2012
3. Mascaro et al. *Social Cognitive and Affective Neuroscience*, 2012
4. Pace et al. *BMC Complementary and Alternative Medicine*, 12(Suppl 1):P175, 2012
5. Reddy, Negi, Raison, et al. *Journal Child Family Studies*, February 21, 2012
6. Mascaro et al. *Journal of Positive Psychology*, 2016
7. DesBordes et al., *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience*, 2012
8. Dodds, et al. *Support Care Cancer*, 2015
9. Lang et al. *Mindfulness*. 2017
10. Gonzalez-Hernandez et al. *Integrative Cancer Therapies*. 2018.
11. Ash et al. *Journal of Healthcare Chaplaincy*. 2020.
12. Kolchraiber et al. *SciELO Brasil*. 2022.
13. Sun et al. *Mindfulness*. 2019.
14. *Titanji et al. Journal of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome*. 2021.
15. Fernandez-Carriba, et al. *Mental Health in Family Medicine*. 2019.
16. Aguilar-Raab et al. *BMJ Open*. 2018.

Research populations

- Patients with HIV ¹⁴
- Patients with PTSD ⁹
- African-American suicide attempters ¹³
- Cancer survivors (US, Spain) ^{8,10}
- Hospital chaplains ¹¹
- Medical students ⁶
- Depressed patients and supportive partners (Germany) ¹⁶
- Marginalized women (Brazil) ¹²
- Parents of children with autism ¹⁵

Significant decrease:

- stress biomarkers and inflammatory response ^{1,2, 4, 5, 14}
- depression ^{6, 9}
- loneliness ⁶
- PTSD symptoms ⁹

Significant increase:

- compassion and related neural activity ^{6,7}
- empathy and related neural activity ³
- self-compassion ^{10, 13, 14}
- hopefulness ⁵

Cognitive Strategies for Emotion Regulation

Craig Moodie, et al, with James Gross.

Cognitive, Affective, & Behavioral Neuroscience, 2020

- Attention deployment
- Self distancing
- Reappraisal

*"One of the reasons that **cognition** is so useful a part of the mental arsenal is that it allows this shift from reaction to action. The survival advantages that come from being able to make this shift may have been an important ingredient that shaped the evolutionary elaboration of cognition in mammals and the explosion of cognition in primates."*

- Joseph LeDoux, *The Emotional Brain*, 1996

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Cognitive Strategies for Emotion Regulation

- Attention deployment *Modules 1 and 2*
 - Self distancing *Module 3*
 - Reappraisal *Modules 4 through 8*
-

“As an **attention deployment**, distraction involves directing attention towards the non-emotional aspects of a situation, away from the emotion eliciting situation altogether, or changing the object of one’s internal locus.”

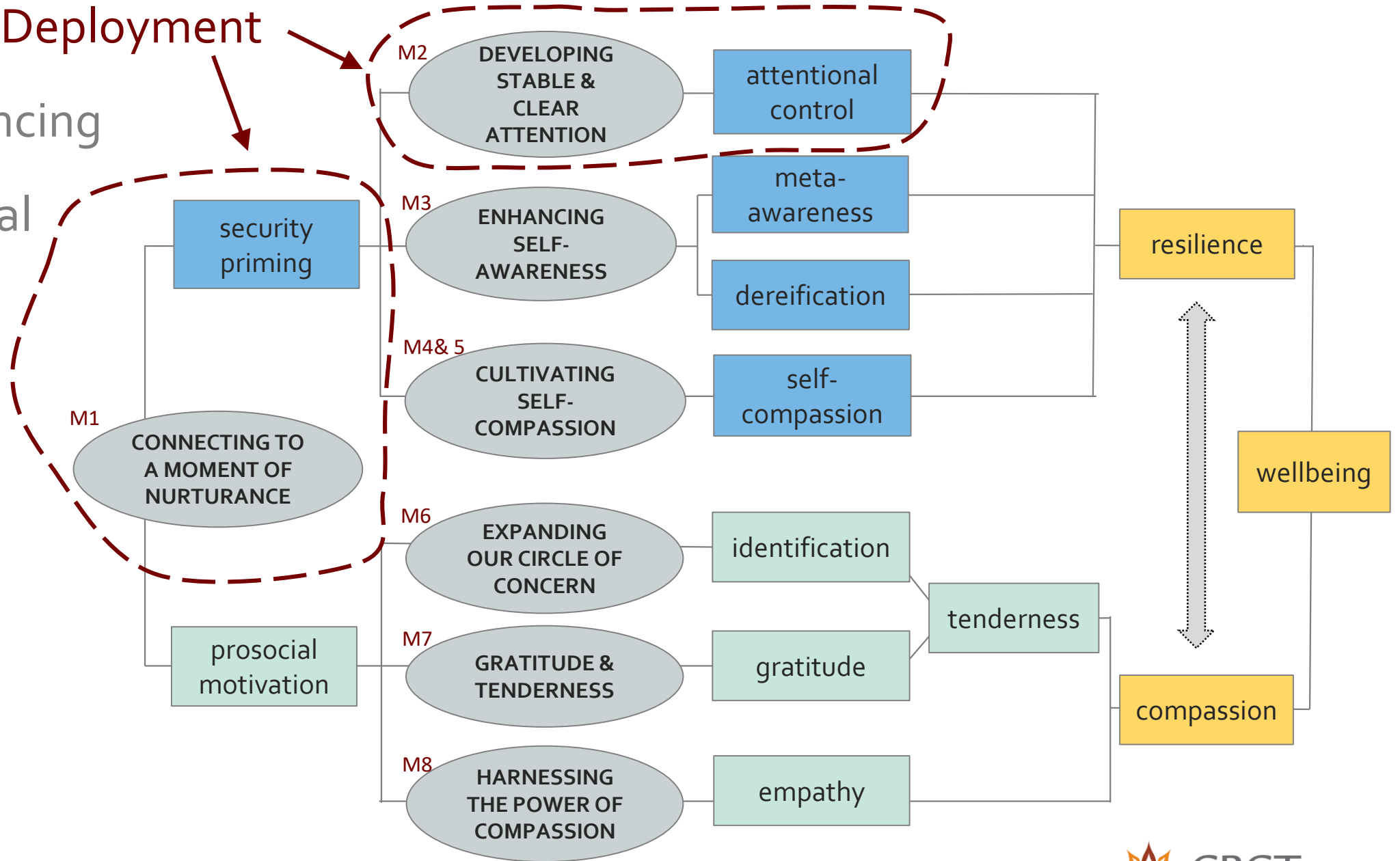
Craig Moodie, et al, with James Gross.

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Attention Deployment

Self Distancing

Reappraisal



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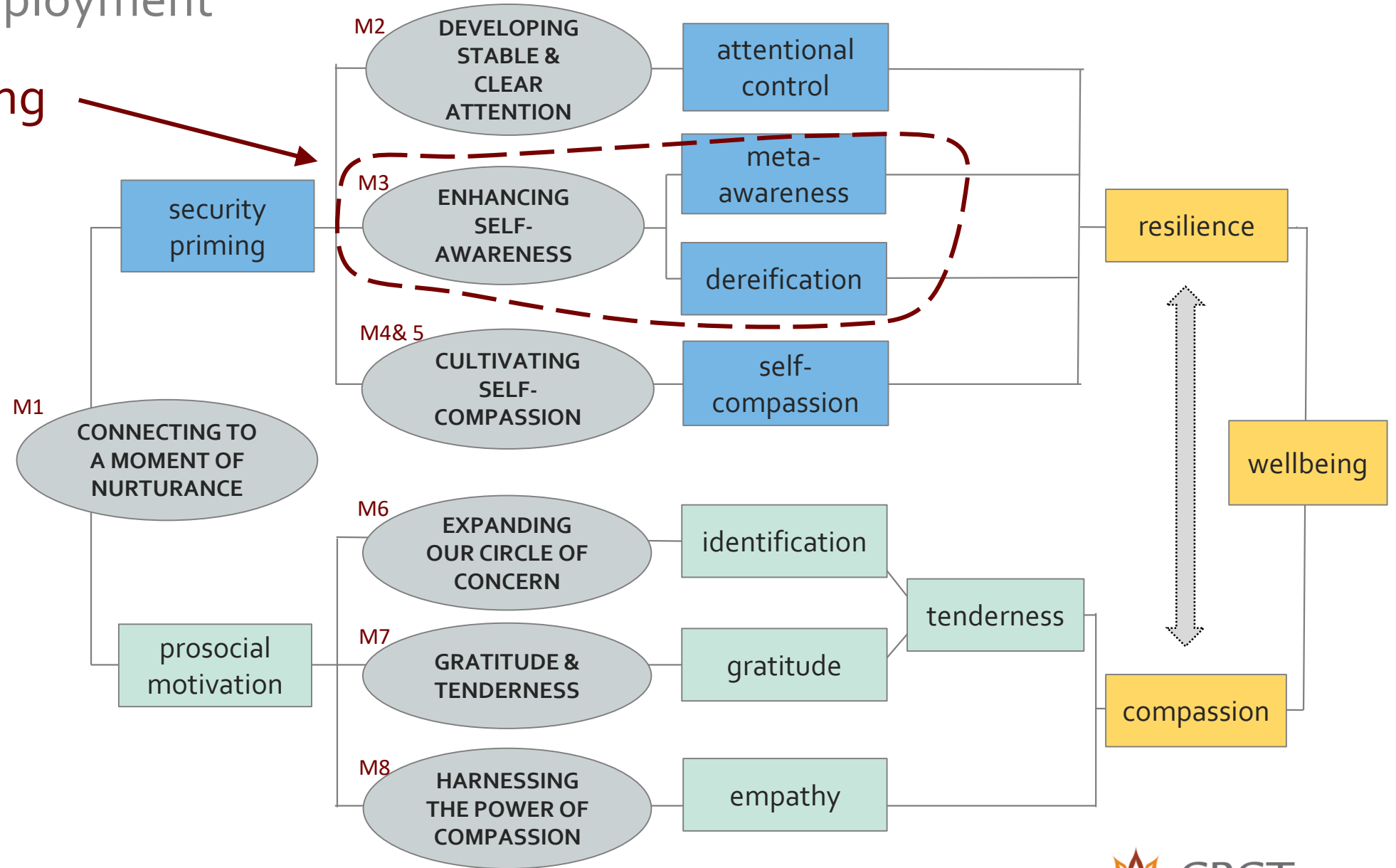
- Attention deployment *Modules 1 and 2*
- Self distancing *Module 3*
- Reappraisal *Modules 4 through 8*

“On the continuum of cognitive regulation strategies, **self-distancing** is thought to lie between cognitive change and attentional deployment. The mechanism of self-distancing operates by individuals separating themselves from the reality of the situation by taking the perspective of a detached and objective observer, such as a doctor treating a patient or a film director observing a scene.”

Attention Deployment

Self Distancing

Reappraisal



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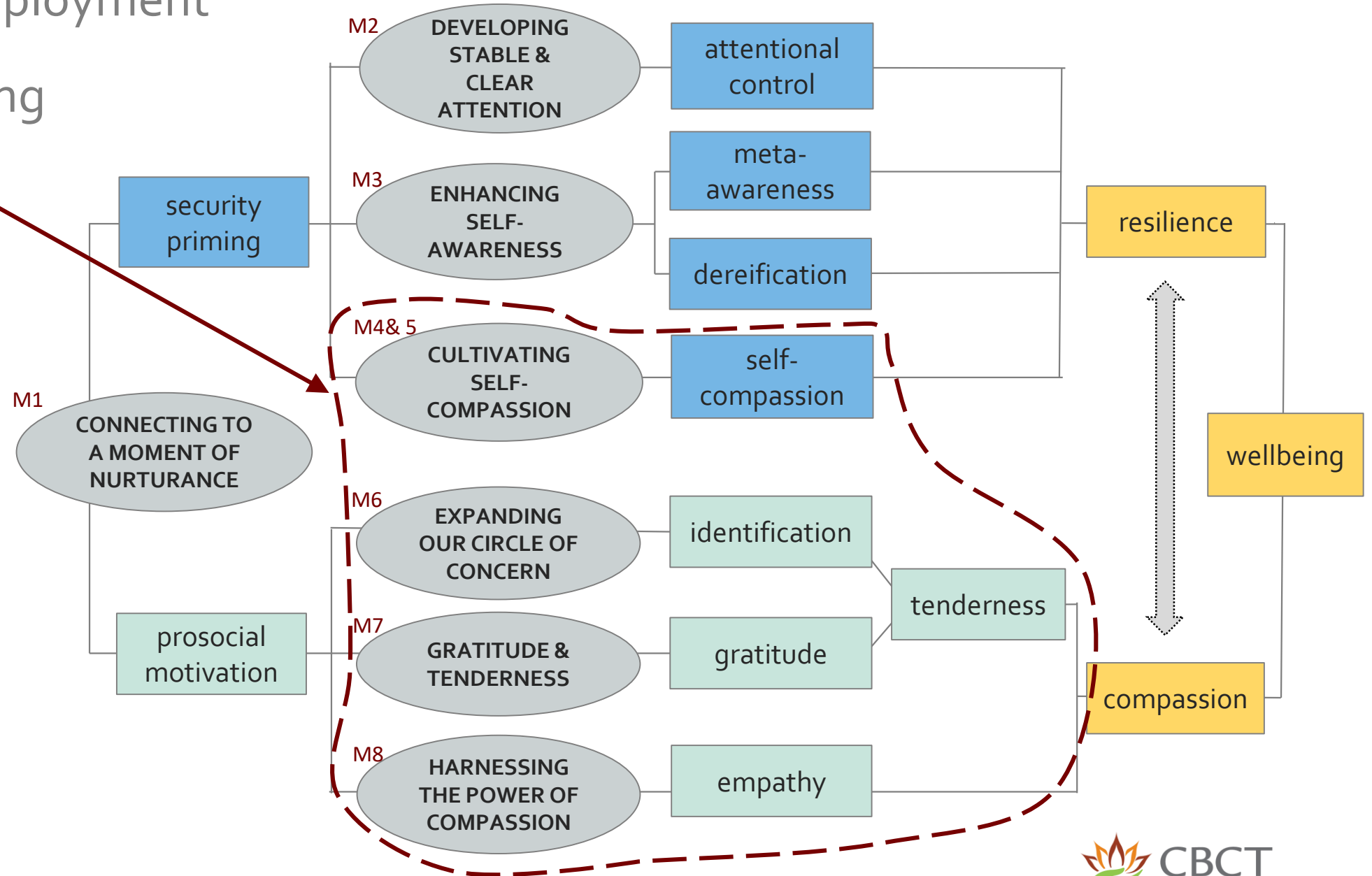
- Attention deployment *Modules 1 and 2*
- Self distancing *Module 3*
- Reappraisal *Modules 4 through 8*

"Cognitive **reappraisal** is a type of cognitive change that involves modifying the meaning of the situation in order to alter an emotion. Reappraisal often is used to reduce emotion and, consequently, is associated with decreases in self-reported negative affect ratings and activity in emotion-generative brain regions, such as the amygdala."

Attention Deployment

Self Distancing

Reappraisal



Wisdom from the *lo jong* tradition



Vasubandhu
Indian Buddhist Philosopher
5th century C.E.

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Reappraisal:

When one has not cleared away the dispositions for afflictive emotions

Attention deployment:

and the triggers for these emotions are in proximity,

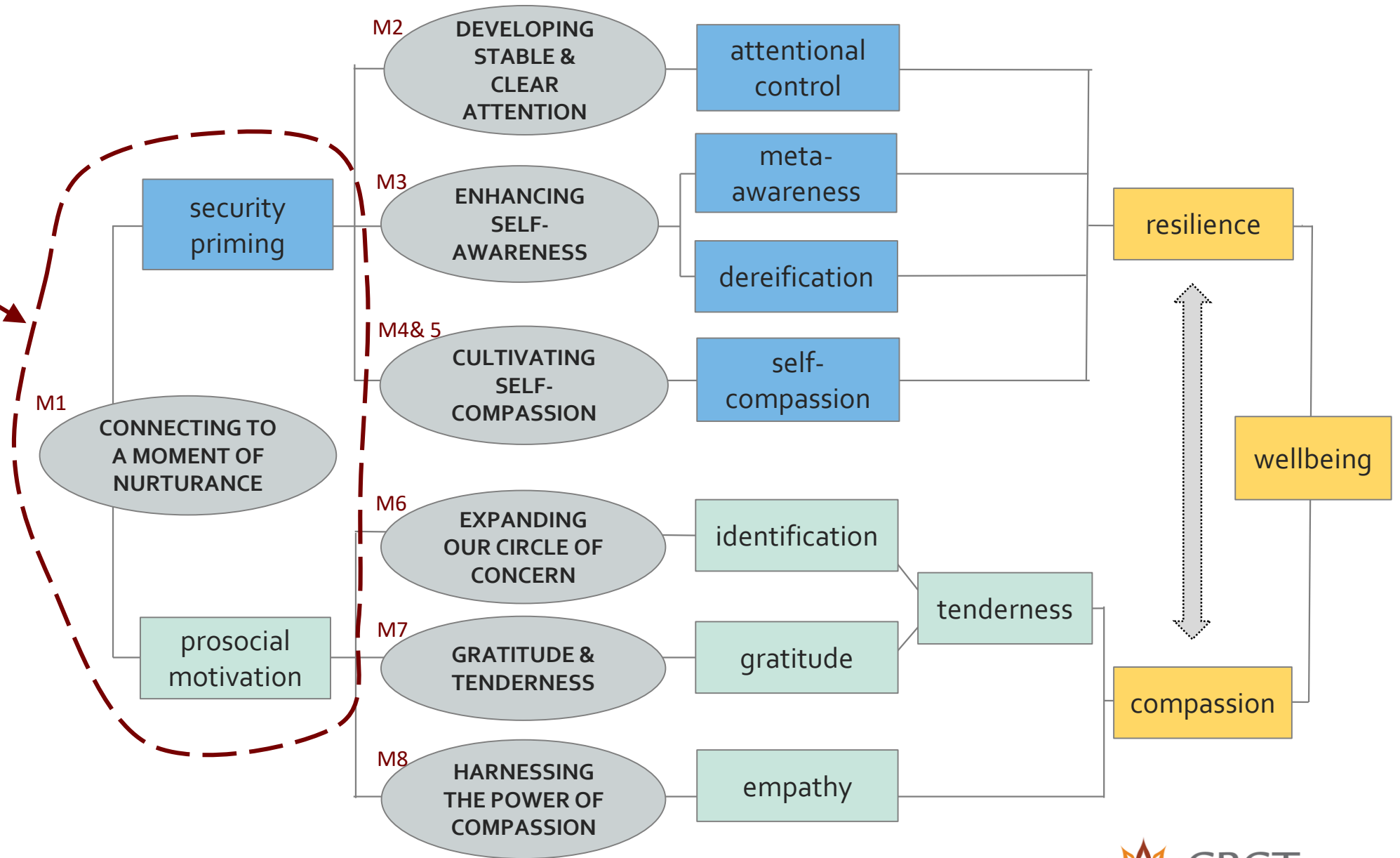
Self distancing:

if one engages these triggers with false projections,

Emotion regulation:

then the causes of the afflictive emotions are complete.

Crucial
Starting
Point



REFLECTION

The importance of safety and nurturance

- List a few moments when you have felt especially safe, seen, or valued.
- Choose one such experience and recall the details, sensations, and factors that led to these feelings.
- How did this moment impact your relationships or other aspects of your life, such as your level of confidence, motivation, trust, or joy?
- What if we never had such moments? How important is it for our world that we all have access to safety and nurturance?

DISCUSSION

The importance
of safety and
nurturance

From this exercise, what did you learn or notice about the importance of compassion and nurturance?

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

LEARN MORE AND ENGAGE

GUIDED JOURNEY TO COMPASSION

- Free and available to all. The self-paced journey is comprised of the video series that, viewed in sequence, provides a thorough introduction to compassion training. <https://compassionshift.emory.edu/>

LIVE ONLINE COMPASSION PRACTICES

- Sessions held 5x per week at a variety of times and lead by an Emory Certified CBCT instructor
- Register and check schedule: <https://compassion.emory.edu/cbct-daily-practice.html>

COURSES FOR THE PUBLIC

- <https://compassion.emory.edu/cbct-compassion-training/cbct-courses/public.html>

Please reach out with questions:

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QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION