

CIT Course Testimonials

I truly loved recognizing the subtle and deeper levels of ways that are important and necessary to change my behavior regarding compassionate thinking and action in my life - A peeling of the onion for deeper personal learning took place for me. This is so valuable and offers me this beautiful opportunity to "see" my core more clearly and to operate from there more often. It's like a light revealed what I knew was there but I didn't have the light before to show it to me in all its beauty and capacity. What a lovely gift for me and all humanity.

--Online student

With CIT, I learned how to recognize and accept the feelings and emotions that sometimes raged within my body. However, CIT didn't just stop there, the program taught me about other people, and how we all go through life seeking to avoid suffering and striving to create happiness ... even though we all may go about that in different ways. I was able to look at the individuals that were in authority over me while I was incarcerated, and I was able to have empathy for them for the first time. CIT enabled me to finally rise above the position of being a victim of the prison industrial complex. CIT empowered me with a healthy understanding of others and of systems, as well as cultivated within me an ability to be empathetic toward others while still keeping a piece of myself safe.

It has been profoundly helpful with my reintegration into society as well. After sixteen years and four months in prison, entering society again with no job experience, no license and very limited resources was terrifying. However, I was able to use CIT and confront the way that my body reacted to those situations in a way that enabled me to remain calm in stressful circumstances so that I was able to make healthy decisions instead of just blindly reacting.

--Formerly incarcerated women

CIT helped me gain an understanding of myself as well as those around me. After Iraq, I began to lose my temper more easily and more severely than before. In ten weeks I clearly noticed that the skills taught in CIT enabled me to better calm myself after and even prevent unnecessary conflict. These same skills allowed me to be significantly more aware and understanding of others around me. CIT has helped me immensely in being able to have empathic concern and find the common humanity in all people – even strangers and enemies. I have not only increased sympathy for them but have a better understanding as to why they are the way they are. It is amazing how much more peaceful and joy-filled life is now that I am able to see past the downfalls and negative aspects of those around me and instead, focus on our common humanity. CIT has positively changed my perspective of the world and all of its inhabitants in a fashion unmatched in quickness or degree. The same course I feared would be a burden, quickly became a blessing. I realized that class had made a significant impact on me by helping in my journey to overcome the internal n produced by the combination of combat and prison. Years of frustration

and negative emotions began to subside in just ten short weeks. I concluded that this was the inspiration I had been searching for in my desire to both alleviate the pain in my heart and make a difference in the world. So I made the decision to share this remarkable program with others and make it a permanent addition to my life.

I volunteered to participate in training required to facilitate future CIT classes. I assisted in facilitating the second CIT classes at Phillips State Prison and did so with as much energy and satisfaction as a student. I believe that this is because with each new class and group of people the experience is unique. I volunteered to facilitate the first section of the course because I wanted to reassure the new participants that they had made the right choice by being here and, if they kept an open-mind, they would add some form of positivity to their lives. This class was an incredibly diverse group of men with significantly different backgrounds than my original class. Yet, they grasped the material just as easily and applied it distinctively to their own lives. I believe I may have had even more fun the second time around than the first. This confirms the belief that CIT is an incredibly adaptive program that cultivates basic human values in order to better the individual, those around us, and the complex social systems we live in. I can attest to the legitimacy of the effects CIT can have on an individual. I believe those around me can attest to how those positive effects have become reciprocated in those around me. And I hope to one day attest to that fact that the changes that CIT has made within me has afforded me a way to make the world a little better place to be in.

--Incarcerated Man

As a wife and mother, I now aim to respond more than react. I have started and will continue to teach and discuss these concepts with my children. I think this understanding will provide them with a strong foundation for life, an appreciation and grounding for their future.

Life University's CIT program is a life changer! Though I never considered myself to be a "negative" person, I didn't realize how very biased my belief system was. As I continue to take steps to try to view the world through a lens of compassion, I can feel the beginnings of a shift in my relationships and the way I view others. I can't recommend this class enough to anyone who wants to improve their worldview and de-stress their inner selves."

The layering of psychology, neuroscience and contemplation allowed a blending of what might be called the 'spiritual with the secular' or vice versa. I found this extraordinarily useful. It meant that material could be used as an entry point for anyone and everyone regardless of their beliefs or culture. This blending removes the barriers so often erected by belief and economic status - stripping our shared humanity to the bare essentials; the need to remove suffering and discover happiness. Two words compassion and reciprocity.

--Online participant

I appreciated that the course suggested actual practices and strategies to develop skills such as mindfulness, empathy, forgiveness, and compassion as opposed to just reiterating importance of such skills.

--Online participant

The experiences and sharings during the online class from fellow participants and from the leaders were amazingly rich and deep. The people that were brought together by this class are people that I would benefit from knowing in person, I'm sure. Secondly, the practices were awesome, especially the ones in the self compassion section, but also the common humanity practices. Michael is a very very good teacher/facilitator and I thoroughly enjoyed what I learned from him and the gentle way that he led the course. I find the scaffolding steps offered were so very helpful: self compassion to compassion to others to understanding the system.

--Online participant

I am very happy to write a testimonial about the professional and personal value of the weekly CIT course generously offered to us at our school. The weekly calm meditative openings ease us into activities that increase our ability to see and respond fully to the larger world around us, the less grand but equally complex world in which we work, and the private, weighted world we each carry within ourselves.

Our leader guides us skillfully through activities and exercises, modeling attentive listening, using wait-time to elicit deeper and more complex responses, and having the ability to put together what we do and say into a bigger more constructive picture. The pace of the group is unrushed yet steady; the sense of camaraderie and the safety of the space for both sharing and listening intently is remarkable.

It is no simple feat to create a safe space for those who often feel overly exposed. Teachers, perhaps more than others, are in position of high visibility, high obligation, high expectation, and high exposure. Teaching is a public profession with no space for mistakes. CIT moves us steadily toward developing our understanding, empathy and compassion.

I have learned immeasurably from these Mondays of focused awareness and guided insights into who we are and what moves and shapes us. The impact has been not only in my teaching and connections to colleagues and students, both individually and as a group, but also to myself and my sense of and place in the world. It has been one of the most unexpectedly wonderful and rewarding opportunities offered at school. I can say without hesitation that CIT has changed my approach to challenges, to colleagues, and to the complex work of teaching and counseling students and colleagues.

On a side note, when those of us in the group have a rare minute to chat in the course of the day, we always talk about how much we love and learn from CIT. That sense of quality delivery,

excellent curriculum, and personal enrichment are, for me, a trifecta. Who could imagine eagerly anticipating an early Monday morning class?

Thank you so much for this professional and personal gift.

--Dean of Faculty, Private High School

It has been a joy to participate in the program as I have benefited both professionally and personally. The lessons have not only helped me to engage with my students more effectively and enrich our discussions of literature and the power of stories, but I find myself drawing upon the value of gratitude as I work towards resolving conflicts with my peers, my fellow teachers. I keep returning to the notion of our shared struggles as a bond that tethers us together in order to maintain healthy perspectives as we work towards common goals.

--High School English Teacher

Compassionate Integrity Training (CIT) has in only a few weeks shifted my approach to relationships at home and work. Although this shift is still in process--and may always remain in process--I have cultivated a conscience awareness of how my actions affect others, and vice versa. Being attuned to resilience is instrumental in expanding resiliency, a task made easier with the skills that CIT fosters.

The interdisciplinary nature of CIT makes space for psychological, emotional, and social understandings of human interaction. This diverse approach weaves together threads of self cultivation, relating to others, and a belief in common humanity that a less thoughtful program might otherwise treat independently.

--History Department Chair, High School

Honestly, when I told my wife that I was participating in compassion training she said, "you? but you already have empathy and compassion." It is easy to see ourselves as being compassionate especially as teachers. CIT has taught me mindfulness and process. It has reminded me of self compassion and the role of seeing every person's perspective. It is easy to empathize with my "in group," but I must practice empathy with everyone. Michael is amazing and is role modeling how I might learn to teach my students to be more compassionate to each other.

--High School Teacher

I wasn't sure initially what to say about Compassionate Integrity Training because I don't think I have changed much through it. At least externally, my actions, and such haven't changed much. Internally, the training has confirmed and helped solidify a lot of things I already believed. It's strengthened my resolve to try and live a higher life and provided tools and

techniques to use so that hopefully I will fall less frequently into the reactive, emotion-dictated way of living and perceiving that dominates almost all of the animal kingdom including at times some of our fellow human beings. Thinking about these internal changes, I can say that the training has been effective and will be as I keep applying the practices after its over. I will be recommending compassionate integrity training to others, and I hope to see more and more of my external behaviors shift over time as I continue to work on the internal change that is the backbone for lasting external changes.

--High School Teacher

Our 'Monday Mornings with Michael' have been a wonderful way to start each week. Michael models good teaching and the class has been a thoughtful, thought provoking, and reflective learning process. The topics we have discussed lead to great discussions and challenge our assumptions. This class has lead to both professional and personal growth. I will miss it...

--High School Teacher

I thoroughly enjoyed the program. It was a welcome break and reset from my busy weekly schedule. While I was not the best at my weekly out of class follow-up, I did learn a lot from the program, and I have definitely adapted several aspects of my behavior because of the class. ☺ The resilience zone concept is one example. Just having the awareness of the concept of a resilience zone has helped me justify lifestyle changes. I now make sleep a priority. If I have enough sleep, I am able to make better decisions and remain in my resilience zone. Plus, I really appreciated the reminder of how connected everything really is and how we do not truly do anything on our own.

--Life employee