

# Cultivating Neuroplasticity Through Volunteering

by Amelia Barili

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## 1. Intro to the course. Orientation on Working with the NGOs.

- \* "Learning to Learn. Neurobiology and Cognitive Science as Bases of Autonomous Learning" by A. Barili (reading)
- \* "Building Nurturing Communities: A Berkeley Story" (video)  
[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZHB8oqb1\\_v4](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZHB8oqb1_v4)
- \* 2 videos by Refugee Transitions:
  - "Pursuing Dreams" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Giqy94kYLOM>
  - "Change your World" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d-LWO303Hps>
- \* Pre-volunteering questionnaire to take home

## 2. What is Neuroplasticity? How to cultivate Positive Neuroplasticity?

- \* Rick Hanson on "Understanding Neuroplasticity" (video)  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rTPks7XQbSw>
- \* Dan Siegel and Rick Hanson on Neuroplasticity : Mindfulness of Oneself and Others" (video)  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b1mzrqWYBCK>
- \* CNA -Speaking exchange (video)  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-S-5EfwpFOk>
- \* "What Neuroscience Can Teach Us About Compassion" by Carolyn Gregoire (reading)
- \* "Creating Positive Experiences" by Rick Hanson (reading)

## 3. Neuroplasticity and Aging. Volunteering and health.

- \* "What if Age Is Nothing but a Mind Set?" by Ellen Langer (reading)
- \* "Mindfulness Over Matter" by Ellen Langer (video)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4XQUJR4uIGM>
- \* "Volunteering Protects Against Heart Disease" Christopher Bergland (reading)
- \* "Helping, Fixing or Serving?" by Rachel Naomi Remen (reading)

## 4. Understanding Self and Other. Learning From and With Each Other

- \* "The Danger of a Single Story" by Chimamanda Adichie (TED talk)  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D9Ihs241zeg>
- \* "Working with Our Stories: Interview with Tara Brach" (reading)
- \* "Being Present in Relationships" Eckhart Tolle (video)  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vshBnR4Z9x8>
- \* "Hello, Stranger" Elizabeth Dunn and Michael Norton (reading)

Optional:

- \* *Lost Boys of Sudan* (documentary)

## 5. The New Paradigm of Learning: Reflection, Relationships and Resilience

- \* "Can Thoughts and Action Change Our Brain?" by Sharon Begley and Ira Flatow (reading and audio)  
<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=7131130>
- \* "Time In: Reflection, Relationships and Resilience at the Heart of Internal Education" by Dan Siegel (video) <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CVYd1W4iAm0>
- \* Excerpt from "Life Re-imagined: The Science, Art and Opportunity of Midlife", by Barbara Bradley Hagerty (reading)

## **6 . Bringing it all together towards a meaningful and shared conclusion**

- \* "Hardwiring happiness: Dr. Rick Hanson at TEDxMarin 2013" (TED talk)  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jpuDyGgIeh0>
- \* "Awakening in the Digital Age" Eckhart Tolle and Karen May (video)  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fp0gaxFxbB4>
- \* Post-volunteering questionnaire

In each class we will have small group discussion, where participants on this course who volunteer with the same organization, will share their experiences and reflections for that week, relating them when possible to what we are discussing in class through our readings, videos and documentaries.

We will also have a brief meditation in the beginning of each class to experience expanding our minds and hearts.