

# Meditation, Volunteering and Positive Neuroplasticity

by Amelia Barili

STAGE	Activity
<p><input type="radio"/> Learning Goals.</p>	<p><b>Goal 1:</b></p> <p>You will be able to define in your own words what neuroplasticity is and give examples of it taken from your own development of psychological resources during this course.</p> <p>You will know what "positive neuroplasticity" is and how to consciously cultivate it in your daily life.</p> <hr/> <p><b>Goal 2:</b></p> <p>You will feel prepared to volunteer serving as mentor in the community. You will have a repertoire of approaches to cope with ambiguities in intercultural situations.</p> <hr/> <p><b>Goal 3:</b></p> <p>You will be able to integrate contemplative practices in your daily life to cope with adversity, pursue your aims, improve educational outcomes, increase your well-being, and maintain good health and positive relationships.</p>

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<p><input type="radio"/> Evidence which will show that course participants have achieved those goals:</p>	<p><b>Evidence 1:</b></p> <p>We recommend you keep notes of your readings and assigned videos, and/or a journal of insights of how you are cultivating positive neuroplasticity in your daily life, and of how your experiences with volunteering and/or meditation are enriching your personal understanding of neuroplasticity. These notes and journals, which are just for you to keep, will be points of departure for class discussions, where we co-learn together.</p>
<p><b>Volunteering, Meditating in class and at home, Journals, Experiments, Individual Observations,</b></p>	<p><b>Evidence 2:</b></p> <p>Each participant will volunteer online at ONE of the three organizations we are partnering in this course. At home and in class you will reflect on your volunteering experiences in the context of our readings and of your own experience. In the last part of each class, participants will gather in groups and will share about their experiences volunteering that week. We will, then, share experiences in general group.</p> <p>This course provides a framework to assist you in mobilizing and internalizing your interpersonal skills, and gaining new perspectives while you assist others by volunteering online with youth or adults at the <i>UCB Equal Opportunity Program –Casa Magdalena Mora, Refugee and Immigrants Transition and the SF Unified School District</i>. In August, participants enrolled in this course will receive an email with orientation dates for each of these volunteering opportunities.</p>
<p><b>Group Discussions, Pre and Post questionnaires.</b></p>	<p><b>Evidence 3:</b></p> <p>We will begin each class with a brief meditation. You are encouraged to integrate these contemplative practices in your daily life (ie, breathing, self-inquiry, affirmations, meditations, and mindfulness). In previous iterations of this course, participants who incorporated these practices in their life have reported great success in cultivating positive neuroplasticity.</p>

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<p>○ <b>Broad Plan of Experiences, Topics, Meditations, Videos and Readings by week, to give you an approximate idea of the structure of our course.</b></p>	<p><b>Week 1:</b></p> <p><b>Topic:</b> Introduction to the course, the teacher and classmates. To understand the principles that guide this course and to begin to reflect on the close relationship between volunteering, neuroplasticity and meditation., read before class "Learning to Learn. Neurobiology and Cognitive Science as Bases of Autonomous Learning" by A. Barili and see video: "Building Nurturing Communities: A Berkeley Story." <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZHB8oqb1_v4">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZHB8oqb1_v4</a></p> <p>See also “Mindfulness and Resilience” with Rick Hanson and Amelia Barili <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fVQ8alDxBLM&amp;t=747s">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fVQ8alDxBLM&amp;t=747s</a></p> <p>Bring to our first-class questions and comments based on these videos and reading.</p> <p>You will receive after class the Pre-questionnaire to self-assess where are you now at the beginning of the course. Please fill it in and return it to me before our second class.</p> <hr/> <p><b>Week 2:</b></p> <p><b>Topic: What is Neuroplasticity?</b> How can we consciously cultivate positive neuroplasticity in our daily life?</p> <p><b>Reading and Video:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* “This Is Your Brain on Bliss”, by Matthieu Ricard (reading)</li> <li>* “The Four Constituents of Well Being”, by Richard Davidson (video) <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HeBpsiFQiTI">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HeBpsiFQiTI</a></li> </ul> <p><b>Meditation: Entering the Now</b></p> <p>We will learn each of these meditations in class and practice them during the following week.</p> <p>Videos will be provided to inspire you to practice along.</p>

	<b>Activity</b>
	<p><b>Week 3:</b>  <b>Topic: What is meditation?</b> How can anyone meditate? The Neuroscience of Meditation  How can meditation help us integrate our body, mind and spirit and feel oneness with others?  <b>Videos:</b>  * <i>Altered Traits: Science Reveals How Meditation Changes Your Mind</i>, by D Goldman and R. Davidson (Talks at Google) video  <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oWFa34u1hqw">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oWFa34u1hqw</a>  * "The Danger of a Single Story" by Chimamanda Adichie (TED talk)  <a href="https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story/transcript?language=en">https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story/transcript?language=en</a>  <b>Meditation: Loving Kindness</b></p> <hr/> <p><b>Week 4:</b>  <b>Topic: Why volunteering?</b> We are all interconnected. You can make a difference  <b>Videos;</b>  * "How to Let Altruism be your guide" by Matthieu Ricard (TED talk)  <a href="https://www.ted.com/talks/matthieu_ricard_how_to_let_altruism_be_your_guide?language=en">https://www.ted.com/talks/matthieu_ricard_how_to_let_altruism_be_your_guide?language=en</a>  * "Me+We=MWe" by Daniel Siegel  <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uo8Yo4UE6g0">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uo8Yo4UE6g0</a>  <b>Meditation: Generosity and Altruism</b></p>
	<p><b>Week 5:</b>  <b>Topic: Resilience.</b> How to cope with adversity and maintain well-being in challenging times?  <b>Videos:</b>  * "Resilience During a Time of Fear" by Rick Hanson  <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wea_XOf-BY">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wea_XOf-BY</a>  * "Hardwiring Happiness" (TED Talk) by Rick Hanson  <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jpuDyGgIeh0">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jpuDyGgIeh0</a>  <b>Meditation: Overcoming Anxiety and Depression</b></p>

	<b>Activity</b>
	<p><b>Week 6:</b></p> <p><b>Topic: Optimizing the Human Experience.</b> The Neuroscience of Compassion. Learning to regulate how we perceive our world and our responses to it. Self-compassion and compassion for others.</p> <p><b>Video:</b></p> <p>* “Understanding Why You Are Who You Are” with Dr. Stephen Porges and Luke Iorio.  <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-hJc3aRk52M">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-hJc3aRk52M</a></p> <p><b>Meditation: Compassion and your Vagus Nerve</b></p>
	<p><b>Week 7:</b></p> <p><b>Topic: Trusting.</b> Turning towards the basic goodness in us and in others</p> <p><b>Video:</b></p> <p>“Trusting the Gold”, with Tara Brach  <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oL8IdD_GWSM">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oL8IdD_GWSM</a></p> <p><b>Meditation: Trusting yourself and others</b></p>
	<p><b>Week 8:</b></p> <p><b>Topic: Taking inventory of memorable experiences and learnings.</b> What life-long learning are you taking from this course? Examples of Neuroplasticity that happened during our time together. What qualities would you like to keep cultivating in your daily life? Is it possible to sustain these changes?</p> <p><b>Audio Transcript:</b></p> <p>“Can Thoughts and Actions Change Our Brains?”, with Ira Flatow and Sharon Begley--Talk of the Nation  <a href="https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=7131130">https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=7131130</a></p> <p><b>Meditation: Embodying the Change We Want to See</b></p> <p>Please, fill in and return to me the Post-Questionnaire with your reflections about are you now, after 8 weeks of consciously cultivating Positive Neuroplasticity and Mindfulness in your life.</p> <p><b>This Broad plan is to give you a close idea of what our course is about. I will update it closer to the beginning of the course. Enrolled participants will receive the updated syllabus on September 17th.</b></p>

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<input type="radio"/> <b>Reflection pieces. Essential for linking the course content to the volunteering and meditation experience.</b>	<p>Keep a journal with reflections and possible questions that arise from the readings, our discussions and your experiences with volunteering, the meditations and your systematic effort to consciously cultivate positive neuroplasticity.</p> <p>See how the reflections, experiences and practices open new perspectives, and help you develop psychological resources, moving from passing experiences or states of mind to more stable and reliable traits of savoring life, self-esteem and self-compassion, empathy, gratitude, for example, as well as reducing anxiety and depression.</p> <p>The journal is mainly for yourself. You are free to choose what to share with us from those reflections. You will see in class how naturally and deeply we are enriched by listening to each other.</p>
<input type="radio"/> <b>Who are our community partners? Choose ONE to volunteer with.</b>	<p><i>San Francisco Unified School District through the San Francisco Education Fund</i></p> <p><i>Refugee and Immigrant Transitions (RIT)</i></p> <p><i>UCB Equal Opportunity Program –Casa Magdalena Mora</i></p> <p><i>Please enroll early in the course. We will be sending detailed instructions and links for you be able to choose by mid-August which of these three volunteering opportunities is the best fit for you. We will also send you a link to connect with the volunteer coordinators</i></p>
<input type="radio"/> <b>Amelia Barili's website and YouTube channel</b>	<p><a href="http://ameliabarili.com">ameliabarili.com</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.youtube.com/user/thenewparadigms">https://www.youtube.com/user/thenewparadigms</a></p> <p><i>This course, its title, description, content outline and class syllabus are copyrighted by the instructor.</i></p>

