

## Neuroplasticity, Volunteering and Meditation

by Amelia Barili

STAGE	Activity
<p><input type="radio"/> Learning Goals.</p>	<p><b>Goal 1:</b></p> <p>Course participants will be able to define in their own words what neuroplasticity is and give examples of it.</p> <p>They will know what "self-directed neuroplasticity" is and how to consciously cultivate it in their daily life</p> <hr/> <p><b>Goal 2:</b></p> <p>They will feel prepared to volunteer serving as mentors in the community. They will have a repertoire of approaches to cope with ambiguities in intercultural situations.</p> <hr/> <p><b>Goal 3:</b></p> <p>Course participants will be able to integrate contemplative practices in their daily life, for good health, well-being, and positive relationships.</p>

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<p><input type="radio"/> Evidence</p> <p><b>which will show that course participants have achieved those goals:</b></p> <p><b>Performance tasks, Projects, Journals, Individual observations, Group discussions, Pre and Post questionnaires.</b></p>	<p><b>Evidence 1:</b></p> <p>Every participant will keep notes of their readings and assigned videos, or/and a journal of insights of how positive neuroplasticity can be cultivated in their daily life, and of how her/his experiences with volunteering and/or meditation are enriching her/his personal understanding of neuroplasticity. These notes and journals, which are just for the participant himself/herself, will be points of departure for class discussions, where we co-learn together.</p>
	<p><b>Evidence 2:</b></p> <p>Each course participant will volunteer at/with ONE of the four organizations we are partnering in this course. At home and in class they will reflect on their volunteering experiences in the context of our readings and of their own experience. In the last third of each class, participants will gather in groups according to where are they volunteering, and will share about their experiences there that week. We will also in general group share and comment on what is happening in each group. Although participants in this course are only asked to volunteer during the six weeks of the course, many of them enjoy it so much that they continue to volunteer for a much longer period of their lives.</p>
	<p><b>Evidence 3:</b></p> <p>We will begin each class with a brief meditation. Participants will be encouraged to integrate</p>

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	<p>contemplative practices in their daily life, be it breathing, self-inquiry, affirmations, and or loving-kindness meditation. In previous courses, participants who incorporated these practices in their life have reported greater success in cultivating positive neuroplasticity.</p>
<p><input type="radio"/> <b>Broad Plan of Experiences, Readings and Instruction by Week, to give you an approximate idea of the structure of our course.</b></p>	<p><b>Week 1:</b> Introduction to the course, the teacher and classmates, and to representatives from the four organizations we will be working with. To begin reflecting on the close relationship between volunteering and neuroplasticity, and how this course was born, read A. Barili: "Learning to Learn. Neurobiology and Cognitive Science as Bases of Autonomous Learning" 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><b>Week 2:</b></p> <p>* Dan Siegel and Rick Hanson on Neuroplasticity (video) The Compassionate Brain Session 2: "Mindfulness of Oneself and Others" <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b1mzrqWYBck">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b1mzrqWYBck</a></p> <p>* "What Neuroscience Can Teach Us About Compassion" by Carolyn Gregoire (reading) <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-S-5EfwpFOk">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-S-5EfwpFOk</a></p>

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	<p><b>Week 3:</b></p> <p>"Creating Positive Experiences" by Rick Hanson (reading)</p> <p>* "The Danger of a Single Story" by Chimamanda Adichie (TED talk)  <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D9Ihs241zeg">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D9Ihs241zeg</a></p>
	<p><b>Week 4:</b></p> <p>"Can Thoughts and Action Change our Brains?" by Sharon Begley and Ira Flatow in NPR (reading and audio)</p> <p>"This Is Your Brain on Bliss", by Matthieu Ricard (reading)</p>
	<p><b>Week 5:</b></p> <p>"Hardwiring Happiness" by Rick Hanson (Ted Talk)</p> <p>"Learning to Respond, not to React" Tara Brach (video)</p>
	<p><b>Week 6:</b></p> <p>Bringing it all together.</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 and the contemplative practices.</p> <p>See how the reflections, experiences and practices open new perspectives, and help you cultivate positive neuroplasticity in your life.</p> <p>The journal is mainly for yourself. You can share some of those reflections in class, if you so choose.</p>
<input type="radio"/> <b>Who are our community partners? Choose ONE to volunteer with.</b>	<p><i>Refugee Transitions at Oakland International High School and at their office in Oakland.</i></p> <p><i>English in Action in Berkeley</i></p> <p><i>I-Host Program at International House</i></p> <p><i>UCB Equal Opportunity Program</i></p>
<input type="radio"/> <b>Amelia Barili's website</b>	<p><i>ameliabarili.com</i></p>