

# COMPASSION TRAINING FOR HEALTHCARE WORKERS

## PROTECT AGAINST EMPATHIC DISTRESS AND BURNOUT

Brain imaging research shows that compassion and empathy are different. Empathy (feeling with another) can accidentally turn into empathic distress (personal distress) for the worker. Compassion, by contrast, is focused on alleviating suffering and protects against empathic distress.

Although well intentioned, empathy can increase the risk of burnout for the worker. Understanding the difference between compassion and empathy is essential for healthcare worker resilience. This award winning course has had over 3500 participants and is now embedded in two medical degrees.

In this course designed by Dr Debbie Ling (1971-2026), Professor Craig Hassed and Dr Richard Chambers from Monash University, you will learn strategies to enhance compassion, avoid empathic distress, improve your own wellbeing and create more caring and compassionate workplaces.

### In the course you will:

- Increase understanding of compassion and the science that underpins it
- Learn how to transform empathy into compassion to avoid empathic distress
- Learn strategies for managing when compassion is challenging
- Strengthen the perception of common humanity to build positive connections to anyone
- Develop routines to sustain compassion in daily work to increase wellbeing, improve patient care and greater job satisfaction.

### Course code

Short course

### Study mode

Self-paced (online)

### Intakes

March, June, August, November each year or by arrangement

### Duration

4 week facilitated period (course access up to 3 months)

## COURSE STRUCTURE

| WEEK 1                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | WEEK 2                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | WEEK 3                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | WEEK 4                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>Introducing Compassion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is compassion and why does it matter</li> <li>• The science of compassion</li> <li>• Transforming empathy into compassion</li> <li>• Practice staying out of empathic distress</li> </ul> | <p>Barriers to Compassion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Compassion can be easily disrupted</li> <li>• Explore reasons for not getting to compassion</li> <li>• Mindfulness in healthcare</li> <li>• Caring for self, caring for others</li> </ul> | <p>Common Humanity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The importance of common humanity</li> <li>• The five moments of compassion</li> <li>• Forgiveness, gratitude and social connections</li> <li>• Creating compassionate workplaces</li> </ul> | <p>Sustaining Compassion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Compassion in our daily lives</li> <li>• Tips to help sustain compassion</li> <li>• Values, ethics and intention</li> <li>• Course summary</li> </ul> |



*"I completed my PhD on compassion training in 2019. There is an absence of accessible evidence based information on this topic. It is crucial that healthcare workers are educated on how compassion can protect against empathic distress and burnout and improve their own wellbeing."*

Dr Debbie Ling PhD, Compassion Course Lead Developer (1971-2026)



## WHAT DOES THE COURSE INCLUDE?

The course includes videos, articles, practical exercises, resources, moderated online discussion forums, weekly feedback videos and a live Q & A Zoom session in week 4. There is no assessment and all content is immediately viewable. The course contains 1 hour of core content and 2 hours of optional content per week, which can be more or less depending on engagement with additional resources, optional discussion forums etc.

## DON'T HAVE 3 HOURS PER WEEK?

The course has had feedback and input from thousands of workers over the years to improve it. Key learnings are summarized in brief downloadable PDFs, all videos have downloadable transcripts and there is a detailed PDF summary of resources in the course with embedded links so that you can go back and look over the material in your own time if you only have 15 mins a week to hop on the course.

## IMPORTANT TOPICS

The course includes strategies for these common topics that come up:

- What if there is nothing I can do to alleviate the patient's suffering?
- How do I manage my own feelings of helplessness or hopelessness?
- I don't have time to practice compassion
- I'm a highly empathic person and easily pick up on others distressing emotions
- I feel frustrated by team conflict and systems issues

## FURTHER INFORMATION

The course page contains information on course cost, dates and enrolments. There is scope for discounts on large bulk enrolments and discounted registration cost for people from low and middle-income countries. Contact [compassioncourse@monash.edu](mailto:compassioncourse@monash.edu) to discuss.



*"A long overdue addition to the professional development of health workers, this course deepens your self-awareness, improves your helping skills and supports your everyday work and life."*

*"A fantastic course. Things were set out in simple terms and easy to remember, especially whilst working full-time."*

*"The link between empathy and burnout was eye opening. I will definitely be holding onto this for my placements."*

Course Testimonials

### LEARN MORE

For further information about the Compassion Training for Healthcare Workers short self-paced online course, email [compassioncourse@monash.edu](mailto:compassioncourse@monash.edu).