

Roots to Thrive

Cultivating the Roots of Caregivers. An Evidence-Based Approach to Minimize Stress and Maximize Thriving

Island Health and Vancouver Island University

Course Outline

Class Duration	Delivery Modality	Group Size
5 weeks 16-24 hours	1-2 full days face-to-face 3 Weekly Video Conferences/Zoom (2 hours each) 1 face-to-face wrap-up (2 hours)	<20

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course centers on developing the core assets that enable thriving and that buffers us from stressors endemic in our caregiving roles and in our places of work. The two most significant resilience factors are sense of coherence (including mindfulness and self-efficacy) and congruence (including self-compassion, addressing trauma, and aligning with calling). These developmental assets are the roots that ground us, mitigating stress and enabling an ability to thrive by 'living our calling.' Thriving happens when healthcare providers use their developmental assets to buffer them against external stressors, lowering their risk of mental and physical diseases, improving coworker relationships, improving job satisfaction, and reducing tendencies to use substances to cope with stress.

Sense of coherence (Antonovsky, 1979), centres on our orientation to life (meaning, comprehension/predictability, and confidence/self-efficacy). Mindfulness is a component of sense of coherence.

Congruence (Rogers, 1959), centres on one's orientation to self. It is the alignment of one's 'real' and 'ideal' self. Self-compassion is a component of congruence.

When combined, congruence and sense of coherence enable us to self-actualize into our best and most authentic self; to thrive.

OBJECTIVES

This 5-week curriculum provides the training tools to be our most compassionate and authentic self. To accomplish this, we will:

- Explore the theoretical and strengthen the practical application of congruence (including self-compassion), and sense of coherence (including mindfulness).
 - The core development factors that impact one's ability to thrive.
 - Gain a better understanding of how SOC and congruence impact healthcare providers and caregiving work environments.
- Explore and attune with the inner world,

- Connecting to one's essence apart from cultural conditioning.
- Engage in self-assessment exercises to facilitate a deep knowing and alignment of the 'real' and 'ideal' self.
- Learn to mindfully pendulate between the inner and outer world.
- Understand the basic aspects of stress management and the strategies to facilitate the healing of past adversities/trauma.
 - Working with our biology to interrupt the fight-flight-freeze response.
 - Working through past trauma.
 - Re-orienting our approach to emotions via non-attachment, curiosity, and self-compassion.
 - Buffering ourselves from stressors by developing forgiveness, gratitude, optimism practices to re-orient our perspective.
- Developing a calling and working toward an ability to live within it.
 - Reflecting on personal experiences, participants identify their unique belief systems and values, resources, and/or barriers that impact the ability to 'live one's calling' and ultimately to thrive.
 - Living as leaders as we forge communities of unconditional positive regard.

OUTCOMES

This 5-week curriculum is intended to facilitate alignment between our most compassionate and authentic self, our professional identity, and our relationships. We will do this by:

- You will strengthen your sense of congruence and sense of coherence.
- You will strengthen self-compassion and unconditional positive regard.
- You will have learned ways to attune with your inner world, enabling you to strengthen and align with your inner resources.
- You will have stress management tools and strategies to facilitate the healing of past adversities/trauma.
- You will develop a calling statement to guide your journey.

CORE CONCEPTS

Sense of coherence: orientation to our world and our culture.

- Acknowledging and building on our resources.
- Essence of mindfulness
- Physiology of stress response, effects of prolonged stress (e.g. shame, trauma, moral distress)
- Understanding the cultural (colonial) elements of healthcare, unspoken rules, the water we swim in and the weather we endure.
- Connection and expression of the emotional and desiring self
- Connection to others
- Connection to nature; the beauty of chaos and order
- Cultivating Gratitude
- Cultivating Optimism

Congruence: orientation to the self - Authenticity and wholeness.

- Expanding our definition of self. What enables us to thrive?
- Examining how the mind works and the power of thoughts (neuropathways, biochemical reactions, creating our reality, neuroplasticity).

- What are our patterns of dealing with difficulty? Stressors and soothing with substances/activities.
- Addressing negative thought programming with loving kindness practices.
- Cultivating self-compassion
- Cultivating forgiveness

Personal and Professional Alignment

- Living a Calling
- Living as leaders

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Upon successful completion of the Course, by coming to KNOW participants will be able to BE an DO:

- Use mindfulness to gain an **objective view of the self**.
- **Challenge one's conditioning**/thought programs and patterns.
- Cultivate **leadership**, providing a safe space for others to be authentic and live a calling.
- **Mitigate the biological impacts of stress**.
- **Practice loving kindness exercises**, continuing to immerse and develop self-compassion.
- **Provide unconditional regard for self and as a result, to naturally extend the practice to others** in personal and professional contexts.
- **Distinguish signal from noise**: helpful practices versus prescribed practices.
- Be able to **self-soothe effectively** (to avoid soothing with external substances or activities).
- Celebrate one's unique gifts, enabling them to **live their calling**.
- **Take actions that align** with one's calling and vision.

PROCESS



The learning methods used in the curriculum follow the principles of adult learning and metacognitive skill development (Stolovitch & Keeps (2011)). The course schedule follows a framework where participants **come to know** the heart of their identity by:

- dropping into their inner world and **attuning** to their values, authenticity and intuition, developing their ability to distinguish the imprints of social conditioning and survival/stress behaviours;
- **strengthening** their true identity and inner/outer congruence through mindfulness, understanding the process of trauma recovery and stress mitigation, and practicing integrity in relationships;
- **clearing** their inner world through self-compassion, insight, and releasing shame;
- developing their sense of “calling” and coherence by **aligning** true identity with professional identity.

The Activities and practices enacted in this course are designed to enable shifts in one's way of being, challenging old beliefs with evidence-based tools and techniques, and offering new perspectives to re-orient oneself. The face-to-face sessions promote a sense of community and trust, enabling participants to engage in dialogue about their journey and to share insights that emerge from the journey. The virtual sessions support the integration of the work in between the face-to-face sessions.

EXAMPLES OF COURSE TOOLS: We use a variety of Tools/Rituals to Promote Sense of Coherence and Congruence Development. For example,

ATTUNING: Pause Practice, Body Scan, Guest House, Gratitude, Optimism, Music, Loving-Kindness.

STRENGTHENING: Loving-Kindness, Affirmation, Authentic Expression, Connecting to Others/Nature, Receiving Unconditional Positive Regard.

CLEARING: Breath (4x4, 4-7-8), Body (stretching/softening), Shake it off/exercise, stretching/softening, EFT, Chakras, Heart Filtering, Mind sweeping, Forgiveness.

ALIGNING: Loving-kindness, Gratitude, Authenticity, Meeting your Future Self, Calling, Visioning, Ikigai

Practices are not Prescriptions. There are many suggestions and exercises included in this curriculum; these are not intended as magic bullets, but to enhance self-awareness through exploration, experimentation, and critical reflection on how each practice may or may not resonate with our unique needs and desires.

Course Preparation: To help track the inner through-line of our true identity, if possible:

1) Contact someone who knew you before you assimilated to societal/cultural ideals (before school age if possible). Ask them what they recalled about you, what stood out to them? What did you like/drawn to? What did you dislike/resistant to?

2) Find a picture of yourself as a young child (ideally before school), reflect on what it was like at that age, can you remember what drew you in, what captured your heart? Perhaps it is certain people, tasks, events, or activities that you remember getting lost in. If you can't recall any memories that young, can you think back to times as an older child where you were immersed in an activity/event/relationship? Consider what drew you, what called you in those activities? What was unique about them? What made them special?

References

Antonovsky, A. (1979). *Health, Stress and Coping*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Rogers, C. (1959). A theory of therapy, personality and interpersonal relationships as developed in the client-centered framework. In (ed.) S. Koch, *Psychology: A study of a science. Vol. 3: Formulations of the person and the social context*. New York: McGraw Hill.

Stolovitch, H. D. & Keeps, E.J. (2011). *Telling Ain't Training*, 2nd edition Updated, Expanding and Enhanced. Alexandria, VA: American Society for Training & Development, Workplace Learning and Performance. ISBN: 978-1-56286-701-0