Compassion Meditation Founder Joins Norton School Faculty

John & Doris Norton School of Family and Consumer Sciences
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Geshe Lobsang Tenzin Negi is joining the UA’s John & Doris Norton School of Family and Consumer Sciences, in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, to research and promote compassion training at the UA.

Cognitively based compassion training, also known as CBCT, is derived from Tibetan Buddhist practices for enhancing empathy and increasing awareness of interconnectivity with others. The goal of CBCT is to cultivate a deeper understanding of our own thought patterns and behaviors, and extend compassionate feelings to strangers and rivals—not only to those closest to us.

This practice is said to help anyone from children in school to employees in the workplace, and is designed to optimize health while reducing stress and depression.

As an affiliate faculty member and principal contemplative investigator for CBCT at the Norton School, Negi will serve as the primary investigator for all University research using CBCT. He will provide technical assistance, teaching and consultation regarding CBCT, as well as ongoing supervision for trainers certified by him to teach the practice.

In 2004, Negi developed CBCT at Emory University in response to increasing evidence of mental distress among undergraduates, including several suicides at the university. He crafted the concept based on insights from the ancient Tibetan Buddhist meditation practice of lojong, which translates to "mind training."

Approached by a student advocating for resources to help young people manage stress and depression, Negi developed the CBCT protocol—typically an eight-week course that meets for two hours each week—and offered it to students as part of a study overseen by Dr. Charles Raison, associate professor in the Department of Psychiatry at the UA College of Medicine and Barry and Janet Lang Associate Professor of Integrative Mental Health at the Norton School.

Positive results from this study led to additional studies of CBCT in at-risk adolescents in foster care and elementary school students, as well as an ongoing study of the impacts of CBCT on brain and immune function in healthy adults.

The UA is the first institution outside of Atlanta, where Emory University is located, to offer or conduct research on CBCT.

"We have already begun to develop a promising body of research regarding the positive effects of this practice on how the body handles stress and on how the brain understands the emotions of others," Raison said. "We are honored to continue this work with (Negi) here at..."
the UA to explore the impact of CBCT on mental and physical well-being of cancer survivors, youth in foster care and persons in helping professions at high risk of burnout."

Negi is a widely recognized leader for connecting Tibetan Buddhist knowledge to scientific applications. In addition to creating CBCT, he is founding and spiritual director of the Drepung Loseling Monastery Inc., a center for Tibetan Buddhist studies, practice and culture based in Atlanta.

He has also been the primary force behind the creation and success of the Emory-Tibet Science Initiative. Over the past five years, this program has transformed how physical sciences are taught to the many thousands of monks and nuns living in exile in India and Nepal by providing them with a comprehensive science curriculum and ongoing education.

Negi’s work has garnered him multiple awards, international speaking invitations, frequent coverage in The New York Times and significant financial support from the Dalai Lama.

"We couldn't be more pleased to have Geshe Lobsang join us in furthering our research on the impact and effects of compassion training," Raison said.

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