

Spring/Summer Reading List 2022

A little context…. throughout the pandemic, our group has been meeting weekly with the explicit goal of tending to the ‘business’ of TIGS. However, we soon identified our implicit goal, that of supporting each other and making meaning with trusted others as we navigated the unrelenting uncertainty and change catalyzed by Covid. Over this time, the themes of our reading lists and newsletters have arisen organically from our conversations, and we are sharing the resources we’ve gathered in the hope that others might also find something grounding and inspiring in this eclectic collection.

Most recently we’ve been exploring the impact of the transition from pandemic to endemic and the return to ‘in person’ connection with others. We’ve shared our different levels of risk tolerance and explored the impact this prolonged threat has had on our nervous systems, and our experience of safety.

What has emerged is an appreciation of the role of compassion and gratitude in helping us both self-regulate and co-regulate with others to create an environment conducive to repair and healing.

Fittingly, this season’s list highlights articles, texts and other creative and thoughtful offerings which address compassion and gratitude

Neurobiology of Compassion:

In this Psychology Today article, compassion and its positive impact on the nervous system are discussed, including its role in reducing activation of brain regions responsible for hyperarousal. Compassion training has also been shown to decrease worry and increase mindfulness and happiness.

https://www.psychologytoday.com/ca/blog/parenting-neuroscience-perspective/202102/understanding-the-neuroscience-compassion

Group Related:

In March of this year, we hosted a conversation with Dr. Elliot Zeisel about his path to leadership, and important lessons he’s learned through his remarkable ongoing career. In response to a question about any tips he has for us all as leaders, he responded, “take very good care of yourself!” We encourage you to revisit this conversation in full (link), or through our resources page on our website.

The following 5 articles and texts explore the benefits of compassion focussed therapy in fostering wellbeing and reducing psychological distress.

Gilbert, P. & Choden (2014). *Mindful Compassion: How the Science of Compassion can help you Understand your Emotions, Live in the Present, and Connect Deeply with Others.*

Gilbert (2009) *The Compassionate Mind.*

Luberto et al (2018) *A systematic review and meta-analysis of the effects of meditation on empathy, compassion, and prosocial behaviours.* Mindfulness, 9(3), 708-724.

Sommers-Spijkerman et al (2018). *Compassion-Focused Therapy as guided self-help for enhancing public mental health: A randomized controlled trial.* Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, (86(2), 101.

Gale et al (2017). *"Do you practice what you preach?" A qualitative exploration of therapists' personal practice of Compassion Focused Therapy.* Clinical Psychology and Psychotherapy, 24(1). 171-185.

Cattani, K., Griner, D., Erekson, D., Burlingame G., Beecher, M., Alldredge, C., (2021). *Compassion Focused Group Therapy for University Counseling Centers: A Clinician's Guide*, Routledge, New York.

"In this companion set of Compassion Focused Group Therapy guides for group facilitators and for group participants, the authors have created a remarkably accessible resource that promotes deeply humane, high quality clinical care. The manuals are written with the wisdom of experienced group therapists utilizing a structured, well- defined and well- researched model of compassion focused care. These therapy guides address the implementation gap that so often exists between theory and clinical practice in ways that are particularly relevant for today’s group therapists and their clients." ―Molyn Leszcz, MD, FRCPC, CGP, DFAGPA,

Of Interest:

David Whyte, *Consolations: The Solace, Nourishment and Underlying Meaning of Everyday Words,* 2016, Many Rivers Press: Washington.

We may need to include this beautiful book in all our reading lists. As we noted in a previous list, this exquisite collection of 52 short essays explores the underlying meaning of words and feelings that we may have taken for granted… until now.

David Whyte, *“Gratitude … is not a passive response to something we have been given, gratitude arises from paying attention, from being awake in the presence of everything that lives within and without us.”*

Fiona Rawle, *A pedagogy of kindness: the cornerstone for student learning and wellness*, UofT, The Campus, August 2021.

<https://www.timeshighereducation.com/campus/pedagogy-kindness-cornerstone-student-learning-and-wellness>

“When a home is constructed from stone, the cornerstone is the first stone to be laid. It orients the placement of all that follows. It can’t be added on later. The same is true of a pedagogy of kindness. It can’t be a checklist that is pasted over a syllabus that already exists – it needs to be foundational to course design and central to an instructor’s teaching practice.”

We have read and re-read this beautiful article as we plan and organize our educational programs.

*A Lazy Thought,* Eve Merriam

There go the grownups
To the office,
To the store.
Subway rush,
Traffic crunch;
Hurry, scurry,
Worry, flurry.

No wonder
Grownups
Don’t grow up
Anymore.

It takes a lot
Of slow
To grow.

Mary Jo Leddy, *Radical Gratitude*, 2002, New York: Orbis Books.
This small book is a guide to attaining the gratitude 'that frees our spirit and helps us to appreciate more deeply family, community, the earth and ourselves.’ We have turned to its pages often in search of grounding and inspiration.
Mary Jo Leddy is a Canadian writer, activist and theologian who has been recognized for her work with refugees at Toronto’s Romero House.

*“Compassion is an unstable emotion. It needs to be translated into action, or it withers. The question is what to do with the feelings that have been aroused, the knowledge that has been communicated… It is passivity that dulls feeling.”*

Susan Sontag (2003) Regarding the Pain of Others.

Joan Halifax, *Standing at the Edge - Finding Freedom Where Fear and Courage Meet*, 2018, Flatiron Books: New York.

We have noted this text in a previous reading list but have included it again here because Halifax beautifully articulates the difference between compassion and empathy. Empathy she suggests, refers to imagining yourself in another’s shoes; Compassion, she argues, is an action word – how we use our attunement to do something.

She presents evidence of the neurobiological distinction between empathy and compassion, explaining that when you immerse yourself in someone’s suffering, it activates neural pathways associated with pain, which can result in feeling overwhelmed, drained, and immobilized. Whereas the experience of compassion (observing another in pain) is registered in neural pathways associated with positive emotion, maternal love, and feelings of affiliation, which can drive action.

*Messenger,* Mary Oliver

My work is loving the world.
Here the sunflowers, there the hummingbird—
equal seekers of sweetness.
Here the quickening yeast; there the blue plums.
Here the clam deep in the speckled sand.

Are my boots old? Is my coat torn?
Am I no longer young, and still not half-perfect? Let me
keep my mind on what matters,
which is my work,

which is mostly standing still and learning to be
astonished.
The phoebe, the delphinium.
The sheep in the pasture, and the pasture.
Which is mostly rejoicing, since all the ingredients are here,

which is gratitude, to be given a mind and a heart
and these body-clothes,
a mouth with which to give shouts of joy
to the moth and the wren, the sleepy dug-up clam,
telling them all, over and over, how it is
that we live forever.

### Alex Lickerman, *“The real meaning of compassion”*from blog,  [***Happiness in this World***](https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/happiness-in-world)*,* excerpt from Psychology Today, November 5, 2009

Lickerman, a practicing Buddhist, maintains that compassion is caring about another person’s happiness as if it were your own. It requires an unconditional belief in the capacity for goodness, and it often requires endurance in the face of others’ pessimism. He also believes that compassion is action oriented and that it has much in common with courage in that both require moral strength and can be met with criticism from others.

We’d like to end this season’s list of recommendations with the words of Thich Nhat Hanh, 1926-2022, Vietnamese Buddhist monk, peace activist, author, poet, teacher and ’Father of Mindfulness’.

## Thich Nhat Hanh on *Compassion*

## “One compassionate word, action, or thought can reduce another person's suffering and bring him joy.

One word can give comfort and confidence, destroy doubt, help someone avoid a mistake, reconcile a conflict, or open the door to liberation.

One action can save a person's life or help him take advantage of a rare opportunity.

One thought can do the same, because thoughts always lead to words and actions.

With compassion in our heart, every thought, word, and deed can bring about a miracle.”