

# JOURNEY IN... YEAR TWO THE DIVINE WITHIN SCIENCE

## This lesson's Big Ideas:

- When we recognize that the Divine that is within us is also in every other human being, we feel compassion for ourselves and for others.
- Compassion, the deep understanding and sharing of another being's feelings, can be cultivated and nurtured.
- Acted upon, compassion contributes to our own well-being and the greater good of the entire world.

## Lesson Materials

- Web browser with link open to diagram of human brain with select functions marked
- This document open and showing the images on the last page
- Web browser with tabs open for three videos about animals, cued up ahead of time in separate tabs

## TEACHER REFLECTION AND PREPARATION

🕒 Ahead of time

Jesus said to them, "For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me." Then the righteous will answer him, "Rabbi, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?" And he will answer them, "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me." - Matthew 25:35-40

When you begin to touch your heart or let your heart be touched, you begin to discover that it's bottomless, that it doesn't have any resolution, that this heart is huge, vast, and limitless. You begin to discover how much warmth and gentleness is there, as well as how much space. - Pema Chödrön

A human being is a part of the whole called by us universe, a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feeling as something separated from the rest, a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest to us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty. - A. Einstein

If you want others to be happy, practice compassion. If you want to be happy, practice compassion.

- The Dalai Lama

## **CHECK-IN**

🕒 5-10 minutes

Allow one of the teachers to lead the group in a name game, an icebreaker, a get-to-know-you questions, or a simple ‘How are things?’ moment. Spend more time if the group seems eager to connect with each other. Light the chalice and say:

We light this chalice as a symbol of our faith, the light of truth, and the warmth of love.

## **COVENANT**

🕒 3 minutes

Review the discussion of how the group wants to be together. Update the notes, if necessary. Save the covenant for future classes.

- Share this document on your screen, if you can.

## **GATHERING AND FOCUSING COMPASSION AND OUR BRAIN**

🕒 5 minutes

When you’ve felt compassion for someone, when you’ve really understood their fear or sadness, how has your body responded? Our brains respond to people in distress! Here’s a map of our brain and where different things tend to happen.

- One teacher should share their screen with this link open in a browser [Hidden Talents--Brain 12 Left Brain](#). You can click the “**RIGHT Brain**” button on the menu at the top of the web page to toggle between this diagram of the function of areas of the left side of the brain and one of the right side.

We can see which parts of our brain are related to compassion. People can teach their brains and hearts to feel more compassion for a bigger and bigger circle of people. There are monks who practice compassion in their prayers and meditation so much that their whole brains light up with loving thoughts. Scientists have studied the brain activity of people who are either new to or experts at meditating. You can see the colored areas in their brains and the differences between the experts and novices.

- One teacher should share their screen and have this document open to page 5.

## **PRIMARY ACTIVITY ONE ANIMAL NATURE**

🕒 25 minutes

People aren’t the only beings who feel compassion and act on our caring impulses. There are lots of examples of compassion in nature, too! Have you heard any stories about animals that have acted in caring, compassionate ways? Do you think that this means the animals think and feel like us? I wonder...

We have several videos of animals who help or save other animals or people. The videos should be opened in a browser window and cued up by a teacher ahead of time. You can watch a little bit at a time and talk together in between clips or watch as many as you want to and talk after.

- This link is to a video with stories about large, wild animals rescuing humans. The first two stories are most appropriate to our lesson today. To skip the intro, cue it to 39 seconds. The first story is about a gorilla protecting a human child that fell into a zoo enclosure and runs to 1:37. The second story is about a whale in an aquarium that helped a diver and runs from 1:38 to 2:27.  
[Hero Animals Saving Humans Caught On Camera - YouTube](#)
- This link is to a video with a single story about a pet that brought emergency assistance to its home that was on fire. It runs 3:38 and shows how the dog led police to the home.  
[Buddy the Hero Dog saves his Family - Part 1 | Extraordinary Dogs - YouTube](#)
- This link is to a video with several short pieces about animals that adopted baby animals of another species. Cue it to 18 seconds to skip the intro. A few of the most appropriate pieces are:
  - A dog adopts two tiger cubs whose mother wouldn't care for them 0:18-0:56
  - A cat adopts several baby squirrels and cares for them with her litter of kittens 0:57-1:31
  - A sheep dog adopts a lamb creating a permanent bond 2:39-3:08
  - A chicken adopts an abandoned litter of kittens 3:09-3:31[10 Animals That Adopted Other Species - YouTube](#)

### Wondering Together:

- How did the animal act in this video story? Why do you think the animal acted like that?
- Are humans the only creature capable of compassion?
- Have there been stories where people have felt or acted the same way?
- I wonder if animals think more or feel more?
- What other stories have you heard or seen where an animal acted to help or save another being?  
Does this come from compassion?
- What can we learn from the animal in this story?
- Should human beings feel compassion for animals?

## **CLOSING AND LEAVE-TAKING**

🕒 3 minutes

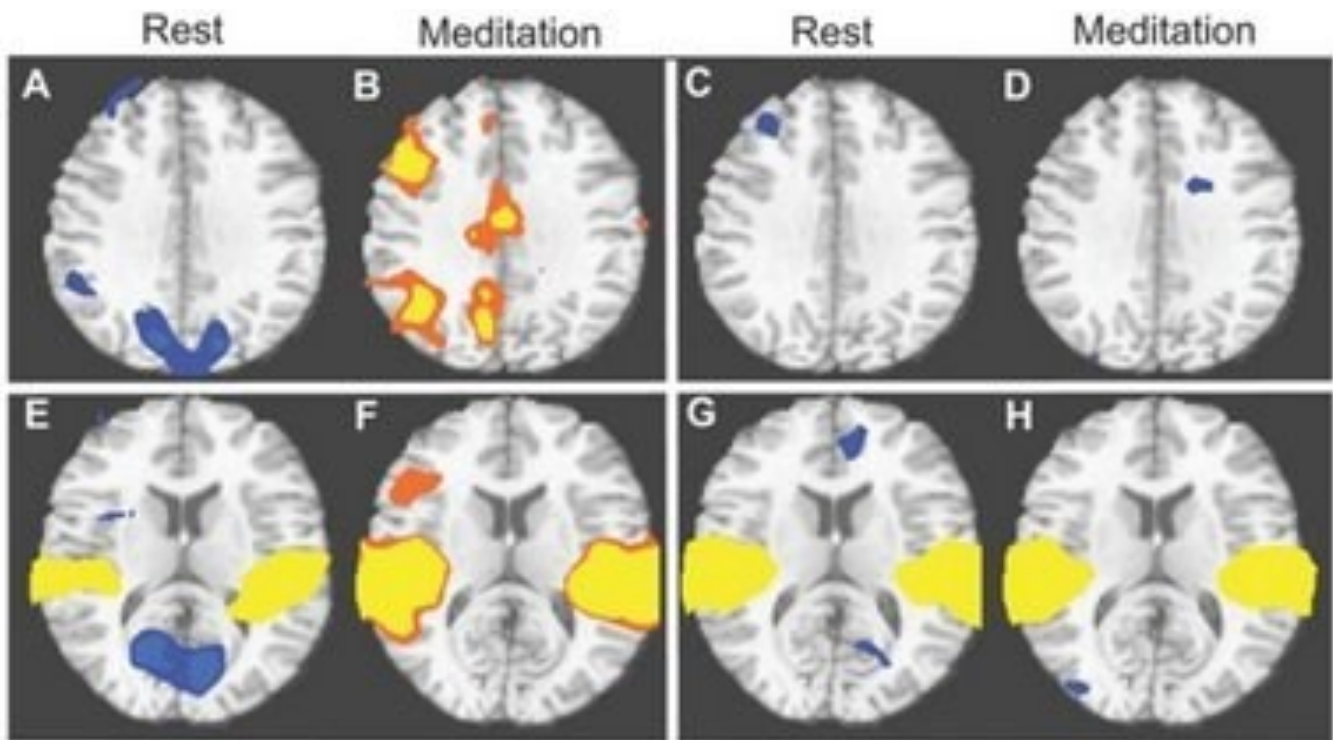
Share this page on one teacher's screen. Join hands in a circle (by having everyone hold their hands up at the edge of the view of their camera) or ask everyone to assume a comfortable, meditative position. Speak these words, or words like them, the children repeating each line after you.

The Holy is inside us  
And the Holy is inside everyone  
May we love and understand ourselves  
May we love and understand others  
May we love and understand the whole Universe  
May our hearts be tender  
May our minds shine friendliness into the world

*and/or*

We want others to be happy  
Let us practice compassion  
We want to be happy ourselves  
Let us practice compassion

Unlight the chalice, saying: though we extinguish the light of the chalice here, we know that the light of truth and the warmth of love go with us in our hearts.



Experts

Novices

Areas showing a negative ( dark blue,  $p < 0.01$ , blue,  $p < 0.005$ ) or positive (orange,  $p < 0.01$ , yellow,  $p < 0.005$ ) impulse response on average across 10 seconds in responses to all emotional sounds for the 15 novices and 15 experts at  $z = 31$  compared to baseline (figs. A–D) and  $z = 13$  (figs. E–H) (voxel-by-voxel paired t test compared to 0, corrected at  $p < 0.01$ ).

Lutz A, Brefczynski-Lewis J, Johnstone T, Davidson RJ (2008) Regulation of the Neural Circuitry of Emotion by Compassion Meditation: Effects of Meditative Expertise. *PLoS ONE* 3(3): e1897. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0001897