



*Performance Enhancement, Awareness & Knowledge*

## Participant's Workbook and Journal



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# INTRODUCTION

mPEAK (Mindful Performance Enhancement, Awareness & Knowledge) is an intensive course in mindfulness training for those who seek a more balanced way to achieve their goals, both personal and professional, as well as attain new levels of performance and success. This cutting-edge training program is built around the latest brain research related to peak performance, resilience, focus, and “flow”. The mPEAK program enhances the human capacity of mindfulness through established and empirically supported practices and exercises. Mindfulness is effective precisely because it is a way of being and relating to all aspects of life, rather than a specific technique or tool for a particular goal. As with physical training, this brain-training program is based on the understanding that optimal outcomes occur most often when participants continue to engage in the practices and exercises on a daily basis as a part of their training regimen. The foundation of this program is drawn from the highly respected and empirically-supported Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program, developed by Jon Kabat-Zinn, PhD. Additionally, the program incorporates specific practices and exercises formulated to correspond to recent neuroscientific findings, competitive advances, and related research regarding optimal performance.



# HOW TO USE THIS WORKBOOK

This workbook is a companion to the mPEAK 3-day intensive or 8-week course. It organizes the informational material about mindfulness and performance into one resource to streamline the didactic portions of mPEAK. In the pages provided, you can also record insights and reflections on the various experiences you'll have along this journey. Your time in the mPEAK course will be distributed over the following categories:

**Formal Mindfulness Meditation Practices** Meditation is a specific period of practice often done in stillness and silence. Meditation training re-wires the brain through neuroplasticity to increase your capacity for presence, discernment and flow in your life, work and sport. The formal practices introduced in mPEAK are: The Body Scan, Awareness of Breath, Mental Noting, Mindful Movement and Self-Compassion.

**Experiential Exercises** These exercises are like a mirror to more clearly see the way you relate to various aspects of performance. By observing your own conditioned thoughts, habits and identities in the face of these challenges, you recognize what is serving your performance and what might be holding you back.

**Didactic Topics** Each section of this course offers just enough science and information to help you build a conceptual framework around mindfulness and ideally inspire you to practice. The emphasis of mPEAK is less on learning about mindfulness and more on actually being mindful.

**Journal Exercises** The workbook provides dedicated pages to reflect on your past experiences with various performance related topics. Journaling itself can be a mindfulness practice of observing and recording thoughts and feelings onto paper.

**Dyads/ Triads** Sharing your experience is an important part of deepening your awareness of yourself in relation to others. You are encouraged to connect with authenticity and vulnerability with as many other participants as possible. Participants often say they learn as much from the others sharing as from the course content.

**Group Coaching and Discussion** After each experiential exercise or formal practice, an invitation is offered for discussion and coaching around challenges or insights that may have come up. Coaching is a process of inquiry intended to deepen self-awareness and personalize strategies to integrate mindfulness into areas of life and performance. Even though only a few participants are coached after each activity, everyone can benefit from these interactions.

**Operationalized Mindfulness Practices** Sometimes referred to as “Informal Mindfulness Practices”, these are short, on the spot practices intended to integrate mindfulness into everyday life and performance activities. These are offered as home practices at the end of each section.





## YOUR INNER COMPASSIONATE COACH

Striving for perfection is an applauded quality within high performance cultures. In this section we'll explore your relationship with perfectionism and it's connections with the inclination towards Inner Criticism. Practices will be introduced to clarify the voice of your "Inner Critical Coach" and it's antidote, your "Inner Compassionate Coach" -the aspect of your Self that nurtures shame, learns from mistakes and encourages you from a place of kindness.



## JOURNAL: PERFECTIONISM

*What is your perspective on failure?*

*What is your experience with perfectionism?*

*What are the perceived benefits of perfectionism to your performance?*

*What are the perceived costs of perfectionism to your performance?*

*What are the perceived costs of perfectionism to your life and wellbeing?*



## TOPIC: PERFECTIONISM

Perfectionism is a personality disposition or habitual approach to life that is characterized by striving for flawlessness and maintaining extreme performance standards. There is often an assumption that one needs to be a perfectionist in order to perform at one's best and stay ahead of the competition. This assumption is all too often reinforced by norms that have long been embedded in athletic, military and corporate cultures.

Perfectionism seems reasonable for an Olympic athlete who trains all day for four years to compete in an event that lasts less than a minute and can be lost by a fraction of a second. Perfectionism makes sense for law enforcement or surgeons whose errors cost lives. With up to 90% failure rate, perfectionism seems like obvious requirement for a new start-up company.

### **The problem is, perfectionism doesn't work.**

*Perfectionism is not the same thing as striving to be your best. Perfectionism is the belief that if we live perfect, look perfect, and act perfect, we can minimize or avoid the pain of blame, judgment, and shame. It's a shield. It's a twenty-ton shield that we lug around thinking it will protect us when, in fact, it's the thing that's really preventing us from flight.*

Brené Brown



## Your Inner Compassionate Coach

- By definition perfectionism is an unrealistic expectation. The bar is so high that you're never really able to succeed, re-enforcing the believed story that, "I'm not good enough". Rather than being motivated by the high bar, perfectionist people end up getting performance anxiety, "choking" and begin avoiding risk, since failure at some point is inevitable but intolerable.
- Perfectionists are identified with their results. They believe that their personal value is derived from how well they performed that day. If I \_\_\_\_\_ (won x, closed x deals, weighed x pounds) then I'm good. If I didn't, I'm bad.
- Perfectionists tend to be overly concerned about the evaluation of others. The mind of the perfectionist is always comparing to fantastic standards and assuming that others are criticizing them as harshly as they criticize themselves. This feeling that every move is being watched and scrutinized by leadership or peers leads to self-doubt and hesitation.
- Constantly striving for perfection is an unsustainable effort. Perfectionists are prone to injury or burnout and have higher levels of stress and anxiety linked with poor physical health (asthma, migraines and chronic pain) and increased risk of death.





# TOPIC: THE INNER CRITICAL COACH

High perfectionism is associated with higher than normal levels of inner criticism. In mPEAK we'll use the name Inner Critical Coach to personify the voice in your head that beats you up for falling short or an expectation. We all have the tendency to criticize ourselves to some degree. For some it happens occasionally, triggered by a poor performance. For others, it's the everyday way of being. Listening to and believing this voice leads to ambivalence, low self-esteem, catastrophizing, shame, anxiety, worry, exhaustion and ultimately the failure you're most trying to avoid.

The reason for naming or labeling the voice of the Inner Critical Coach is to shift it from a vague subjective experience to a more solid objective one. When the critical thoughts and emotions, become an object in your awareness with a name, they can finally lose their power and can be more wisely managed.

Although ineffective, the intentions of your Inner Critical Coach aren't all malicious. From one perspective, this voice is actually trying to prepare and protect you from disapproval, hurt, looking bad or failing. The philosophy of this inner voice is "better me than them" – in other words, it is better for your own inner critical voice to whip you into conformity before someone else does. Knowing this can help cultivate a compassionate relationship with your Inner Critical Coach rather than fighting against it.



# EXERCISE: THE INNER CRITICAL COACH

*Associated Thoughts/Sayings*

*Tone and Attitude*

*Name of the Inner Critic*

*What part of the Inner Critic's story might be partially true? What part of the story is false or judgmental?*

*Create Informal Practices: Brainstorm ways you could manage or mindfully work with this voice when you notice it*

1.

2.

3.



# TOPIC: SELF COMPASSION



The definition of self-compassion is related to the more general definition of compassion itself. Feelings of kindness and caring are a natural and healthy response to the presence of someone else's suffering. When compassion is felt for someone who has made a mistake, it means that an open-minded, non-judgmental attitude is taken towards the person as opposed to an attitude of criticism or judgment. Another unique feature of compassion is that you recognize your shared humanity with another person. To error is to be human. We all fail, we all suffer and we all want to be happy and perform at our best. You and every other human being has felt this way, and it's alright.

Self-compassion is this same attitude turned towards oneself. For many, this is a much more challenging endeavor. According to self-compassion researcher, Kristin Neff, Self-compassion first involves being open to and aware of one's own suffering, offering kindness and understanding towards oneself, desiring the self's well-being, taking a nonjudgmental attitude towards one's inadequacies and failures, and framing one's own experience in light of the common human experience.

Mindfulness and self-compassion are intimately related and rely on each other like two wings of a bird. You can't practice compassion if you've not noticed the need for it. Mindfulness Practice is noticing the various sensations of pain and be willing to stay with them and explore them as they change. Self Compassion Practice is noticing your reactions to being with pain and choosing to respond more effectively; doing less harm, being more supportive toward yourself.

*What, if any are your hesitations around practicing self-compassion in high performance environments?*



# TOPIC: SELF COMPASSION SKEPTICISM

There is a common misconception that self-compassion is indulgent and undermines personal motivation. This old school perspective assumes that motivation is only facilitated by reward or punishment --a drive to beat the competition and avoid the shame of loss. The fear that makes the Inner Critical Coach tolerable or even necessary is: "if I didn't beat myself up, I'd never get out of bed. I'd just eat cake all day and binge Netflix." But reward and punishment are fairly weak and unsustainable extrinsic motivators for success.

The truth, as shown by research from University of Austin is that higher levels of self-compassion are associated with greater intrinsic motivation and greater personal initiative. Intrinsic Motivation is the purpose filled drive that comes from within. It's a desire to perform for the sake of performance itself and for the love of the process or. This is what Flow researcher Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi refers to as the "autotelic personality". This increase in motivation is because self-compassionate people berate themselves less when they fail, they're less afraid of failure and more willing to take on new challenges. Other research has shown that self-compassion:

- *Works better than perfectionism*
- *Can occur even in the presence of high levels of performance or set standards*
- *Self compassionate people aim just as high*
- *Is associated with lower levels of failure*
- *Decreases rumination*
- *Is associated with lower levels of stress reactivity: decreased cortisol and increased HRV*

## WHO DO YOU FEED?

*One evening an old Cherokee Indian told his grandson about a battle that goes on inside people. He said, 'My son, the battle is between two 'wolves' inside us all. One is Evil. It is anger, envy, jealousy, sorrow, regret, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, inferiority, lies, false pride, superiority, and ego. The other is good. It is joy, peace, love, hope, serenity, humility, kindness, benevolence, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion and faith.' The grandson thought about it for a minute and then asked his grandfather: 'Which wolf wins?' The old Cherokee simply replied, 'The one you feed.'*



# TOPIC: YOUR INNER COMPASSIONATE COACH

If the Inner Critical Coach is the aspect of yourself that reacts to imperfection with harshness and motivation fueled by fear and shame, the Inner Compassionate Coach is the exact opposite. This aspect of yourself accepts you as you already are while continuing to encourage you to perform at the highest level. In it's "Yin" form, your Inner Compassionate Coach is fully capable of kind, nurturing support. In it's "Yang" form, The Inner Compassionate Coach won't let you off the hook. It can have a tough love edge when necessary that encourages you to get up and do what you know you need to do for yourself—learn from mistakes and keep moving forward toward your intentions.

Your Inner Compassionate Coach can be represented and embodied as an archetype, which is an "internal mental model of a typical, generic story character to which an observer might resonate emotionally". Archetypes can provide an operative paradigm or schema to experience the world, be compelled to action, and provide a model for behavior. Archetypal characters are found as perennial themes that reside at the level of the collective culture in which you belong.

An archetype isn't defined by any specific characteristics but instead can be represented by anyone who embodies a compassionate way of being that resonates with you. This could be a role model from your past such as a mentor, teacher or coach. It can also be represented by a bigger-than-life hero from pop-culture movies, television, sports or music. It can even be a historical figure like Abe Lincoln, a religious figure like the Buddha or a mythical figure such as Yoda. The reason you might be drawn to the qualities of a particular archetype is because you yourself have those qualities as latent potentials. It is sometimes easier to see the greatest aspects of ourselves in the reflection of another.



# JOURNAL: THE ARCHETYPE OF YOUR COMPASSIONATE COACH

*Make a list of people from your past along with pop icons, heroes, historical or mythological figures who best represent an expression of compassion that feels authentic to you.*

*What is it about each of these figures that resonates with you? What do they do or who have they been to your or the world?*



# EXERCISE: YIN COMPASSIONATE GESTURES

The power of a supportive hand on the shoulder, a gentle back rub and a comforting hug are things most of us have been fortunate enough to receive from another but not something many of us practice offering to ourselves. When a child or small animal is hurt, a natural response is to reach out with a soothing touch and a comforting voice. This soothing touch and gentle vocalization taps into our mammalian caregiver response, releasing oxytocin and opiates in both the giver and receiver of the compassion. Even primates experience this hormonal release while grooming. We're hardwired for compassion.

Placing your own hand on your body with the intention of soothing yourself when you're feeling sad, angry, and frustrated or any other unpleasant emotion, taps into the same mammalian caregiver response and your body releases the calming hormones to counteract the cortisol and adrenalin that gets released during stress and Inner Criticism.

In this practice you'll be guided to try on several physical gestures that can be associated with nurturing and supportive presence.

*What did it feel like to comfort yourself in this way?*

*Did any resistance arise? How did you work with it?*





# EXERCISE: YIN COMPASSIONATE PHRASES

This exercise is designed to help you discover compassionate phrases that feel authentic, meaningful and relevant to the current challenges you're experiencing. During challenging moments, these phrases can be repeated internally in the tone and with the vocabulary of your "Inner Compassionate Coach". The questions on the following worksheet will help you clarify what kind of words you'd want to hear when you're hurting or in need of encouragement. Although some questions on the worksheet ask what you'd want to hear from another, you never have to wait for anyone else to say what you'd most like to hear. This is a practice of offering to yourself what you wish others would say to you.

Sometimes referred to as "Secular Prayer", your self-compassionate phrases are not affirmations or requests – rather they're well wishes and aspirations. Kindness sent from your Self, to your self, for it's own sake. We don't say our phrases because we think it will make them magically come true, we say them because it's a nice thing to do. This practice "works" whether you feel it or not. If you don't feel a sense of comfort during this practice, that's okay. Imagine the phrases like seeds being planted that you hope might sprout another season.

*What would you say to someone you care for when they're stressed or unmotivated? What tone would you use?*

*What would you hope someone who cares for you would say when you were stressed or unmotivated? What tone would they use?*



## Your Inner Compassionate Coach

Think of someone whose approval and validation you've always sought, but never received. What did you hope to be acknowledged for? What did you want to hear from them when you were stressed or unmotivated? What tone did you wish they'd used?

Circle the words that resonate most from the last 3 exercises and use them to create a few compassionate phrases using the following format:

*May I be...*

*May I know that I am...*

Example:

If "courage" is one of your words, your phrase might be any of the following:

*May I feel courageous*

*May I feel courageous in the face of fear*

*May I know my own courage*

*May courage come through me*

*May I live courageously*



# TOPIC: YANG COMPASSIONATE ACTION

Compassion in it's Yang expression is the practice of taking actions or setting boundaries that honor your deeply held values. This can come in the form of saying no to unhealthy temptation or creating space in your schedule for self-care activities. The distinction here is that action is motivated not by obligation, competition or perfectionism but by an intrinsic drive to do what one needs to do for himself or herself.

Where Yin Compassion is nurturing, kind, gentle and forgiving, Yang Compassion can be bold, assertive and fiercely committed. After months of mindfully observing a harmful, addictive pattern play out, experimenting with a "Tough Love" self-intervention may be exactly what's needed. Tough Love may conjure an image of a militant father threatening boarding school but it certainly doesn't have to look this way. What does Tough Love in it's truest, most compassionate form look like for you? Maybe your Inner Compassionate Coach can be both fierce and nurturing?

Each individual has their own unique expression of both Yin and Yang Compassion and might notice an inclination towards one more than the other. Balance between these two expressions is a helpful aspiration.



### EXERCISE: VALUES IN ACTION

*As an act of self compassion, what's the one thing you know you need to start doing that would make the biggest difference in your life?*

*How would your Yang Compassionate Coach motivate you to do this?*

*As an act of self compassion, what's the one thing you know you need to stop doing that would make the biggest difference in your life?*

*How would your Yang Compassionate Coach motivate you to do this?*



# EXERCISE: YANG COMPASSION- MISTAKE RITUALS

The intention of this exercise is to ritualize an embodied technique for letting go of a mistake or bringing lightness to moments of failure. Where the Yin Compassionate Gestures were a hand over the heart, the Yang Compassion Mistake Ritual is a gesture like “brushing it off”.

In this exercise you’ll be guided to reflect on a recent mistake you made. After connecting with the thoughts, sensations and emotions that are associated with the mistake, you’ll try on various gestures and techniques to symbolize letting go and returning your attention to the next opportunity.

Examples:

- Flush (making a flushing motion)
- Deep audible exhale (feel a release in the front of the body)
- No Sweat (wiping sweat from the brow)
- Brush It Off (lightly brushing the shoulder)
- Scissor Motion (cutting myself some slack)
- Reset (Pressing the hand between the thumb and index finger and say to yourself: control, alt, delete)
- Let It Go (Clench your fist tight and then release, opening your palm)

*Which gesture felt most natural to you?*



### FORMAL PRACTICE:

In this Self Compassion meditation practice you'll put it all together: Inner Critical and Compassionate Coach as well as using kind gestures and phrases. When practiced regularly, even for just 10 minutes a day, this practice has shown to increase positive emotions and affect while decreasing the rumination of the Inner Critical Coach.

A UW-Madison study took fMRI scans of the brains of Tibetan monks and meditators who had at least 10,000 hours of practice meditating on loving-kindness, a meditation that is focused on using the "Yin Compassionate Phrases". The scan showed that the insula, a region near the front part of the brain linked to bodily representations of emotion exhibited significant activity during the meditation. The temporal parietal juncture, linked to the perception of others' mind states and emotions lit up as well. Both areas are linked to one's capacity for sharing emotions and empathizing with others.

In this practice you'll be guided to reflect on an area you've been criticizing yourself for and offer the compassionate phrases directly to the suffering you've caused yourself. You'll keep your attention on your Yin Compassionate Phrases the same way you focused on the breath in previous meditations. When the mind wanders from the phrases, you'll return. Welcome any emotions that arise and don't worry if you don't feel anything at first, it's a practice that will evolve over time.



## JOURNAL: SELF COMPASSION

*What was your experience with this practice?*

*What emotion, sensations or images arose, if any?*

*How do you imagine you could integrate this practice in the upcoming week or weeks?*

