

# The ReSource Training Protocol

## Introduction

This chapter describes the training protocol of the ReSource Project that aims at cultivating compassion over a duration of about nine months. The ReSource Project is a large-scale scientific study funded by the European Union (Reference No.: ERC-2007-StG; Grant Agreement Number: 205557) and the Max Planck Society and is carried out by the Department of Social Neuroscience at the Max Planck Institute for Human Cognitive and Brain Science, under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Tania Singer.

## History and Development of the ReSource Training Program

The development of the training protocol for the ReSource Program was inspired by multiple sources and extended over several years. The origin of this program is grounded in the work of the principal investigator, Tania Singer, on the neurological bases of empathy, compassion and cognitive perspective taking. In the context of this work, she had the chance to meet long-term compassion practitioners such as the Buddhist monks Matthieu Ricard and Barry Kerzin, and many others who in countless conversations and collaborations have helped develop the theoretical backbone of the present program. Other early influences on this program came from colleagues such as Paul Ekman and Paul Gilbert as well as the continued learning experiences provided by the Mind and Life institute in the context of many conferences and multiple personal retreats. Especially noteworthy in this context is the so-called Satori Process, which is based on contemplative dyads[1], [2]. In an altered form, these contemplative dialogs became one of the core exercises of the ReSource Project as we felt that intersubjective abilities and social cognition could be more easily cultivated in real contact with other people than through imaginary encounters, as common in single meditation practices. Another strong source of inspiration for some of the exercises was Tania Singer's experience with the "Non-Violent Communication" program[3] (taught by Regula Langemann and Suna Yanamer, see also [video chapter on Non-violent Communication](#) in this volume).

After this original developmental period, the protocol was further refined together with a protocol development group that met weekly over the course of a year (composed of Tania Singer, Boris Bornemann, Willi Zeidler, Christina Bochow and Matthias Bolz) and included selectively the help of experts during several in-depth workshops. The first part of the training program (Presence) was strongly influenced by the work of John Kabat-Zinn and his eight-week Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction program[4]. The affective part was initially inspired by previous research done in our lab on the effects of loving-kindness, empathy and compassion on subjective well-being and the brain[5], [6] (see also [chapter 15](#) in this volume) and supported by contemplative scholars such as Fred von Allmen, Ursula Flückiger, Marie Mannschatz, Sylvia Wetzel and Renate Seifarth. It was complemented by elements of the self-compassion program by Neff and Germer (see [chapter 16](#) in this volume). Finally, the perspective part was newly developed on the basis of a) previous research on cognitive perspective taking, b) self-work rooted in the Internal Family Systems[7] guided by Tom Holmes[8] and c) classical contemplative meditation exercises[9].

Important inputs for the adequate use of contemplative dyads were given by Kira Kay and Clare Soloway. Johannes Latzel supported the development of the new dyadic exercises which are central to the training.