Introduction to the Dalai Lama
For teenagers and adults
Introduction:
This curriculum was designed in 2013 anticipating the arrival of His Holiness the Dalai Lama to New Orleans, Louisiana. It was created with the intention of introducing the New Orleans population to some of the common themes of the Dalai Lama’s teachings, as well as to the Dalai Lama himself.

Learning Goals:
Through participation in this curriculum, individuals will:
1. Know who the Dalai Lama is.
2. Become acquainted with the concepts of compassion, tolerance, forgiveness, resilience, and happiness.
3. Engage in age-appropriate social-emotional activities that allow them to connect to the other participants.

Facilitator’s Notes:
This curriculum was designed to be used with groups of teenagers or adults of preferably no more than ten. Each lesson should take approximately 30 minutes to complete. Facilitators need no prior knowledge of the Dalai Lama or his teachings, as each lesson provides a scripted plan. It is suggested that facilitators read the lessons prior to presenting and gather any necessary materials. Materials needed for each lesson are listed and any attachments can be found directly after that day’s lesson plan.

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His Holiness the Dalai Lama Volunteer Outreach Team, 2013
Day One: Who is the Dalai Lama?

Facilitator will introduce herself and what will be covered in each of the sessions: compassion, tolerance, forgiveness, resilience, and happiness. Explain that the purpose of the curriculum is to learn more about the ideas that the Dalai Lama teaches, to share knowledge about everyone’s personal experiences with these concepts, and to reflect on the application of these concepts in our own lives. This group will meet for 6 sessions, with the culminating events being the group viewing his New Orleans public talks.

Icebreaker
Have the members of the group complete the following sentences:
1. If I could only eat one food for the rest of my life, it would be....
2. What I want most to see happen in the world is....

Ask the group what they know about the Dalai Lama. Show his picture and ask the group to call out words or expressions that come to mind when they look at his picture or think of him. Then ask a group member to read the following quote:

“Brought up in Tibet as its god-king, the Dalai Lama received all the traditional training and major teachings of all lineages, and became one of the very greatest living masters in the Tibetan tradition. Yet the whole world knows him as a being of direct simplicity and the most practical outlook. The Dalai Lama has a keen interest in all aspects of contemporary physics, neurobiology, psychology, and politics, and his views and messages of universal responsibility are embraced not only by Buddhists but by people of all persuasions all over the world. His dedication to nonviolence in the forty-year-long, agonizing struggle of the Tibetan people for their independence from the Chinese won him the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989; in a particularly violent time, his example has inspired people in their aspirations for freedom in countries in every part of the globe. The Dalai Lama has become one of the leading spokesmen for the preservation of the world’s environment, tirelessly trying to awaken his fellow human beings to the dangers of a selfish, materialistic philosophy. He is honored by intellectuals and leaders everywhere, and yet I have known hundreds of quite ordinary people of all kinds and nations whose lives have been changed by the beauty, humor, and joy of his holy presence. The Dalai Lama is, I believe, nothing less than the face of the Buddha of Compassion turned toward an endangered humanity, the incarceration of Avalokiteshvara [the Buddha of Compassion], not only for Tibet and not only for Buddhists, but for the whole world—in need, as never before, of healing compassion and of his example of total dedication to peace.”

-- Sogyal Rinpoche, The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying

Questions for Discussion:
1. Who is someone that inspires you? What are some of the characteristics of that person?
2. The Dalai Lama embodies compassion in all of his words and actions. Is there a belief or philosophy that guides your daily life?

Thank the participants. Tell them that every session will end with a closing ritual. Have them practice the following ritual. Allow participants to close their eyes and encourage them to think of people in their lives as the following lines are read.

**Closing Ritual (call and repeat):**
May all beings be safe
May all beings be healthy
May all beings be happy
May all beings be filled with loving-kindness
Facilitator: “Hold the loving-kindness that it inside of you, now share that loving-kindness with every being in this room (offer hands), now gather some more of your loving-kindness (hands to heart), now share your loving-kindness with all beings in the universe! (hands to the sky)
Day Two: Compassion

Welcome participants. After doing a brief check in to see how everyone is doing, explain that today’s topic will be compassion and share with them the following quotes.

“When I meet someone for the first time, I tell myself that above all the person is a human being who wishes to be happy and not to suffer, just like me. Age, size, skin color, and social rank do not really matter; there is no fundamental difference between us. In this way, I can open up to that person as though he or she were a member of my own family and all shyness disappears.” - - The Dalai Lama

“If you want others to be happy, practice compassion. If you want to be happy, practice compassion.” -- The Dalai Lama

Questions for Discussion:
1. What is your personal definition of compassion and what are some of the ways you practice it in your daily life?
2. Describe a time when someone showed compassion to you in a meaningful way or at a meaningful time.
3. What are some ways to develop more compassion in our lives, especially for those with whom we struggle or dislike?

Activity:
Ask participants if they have ever participated in a Tonglen Meditation. Explain that the Tonglen Meditation is practice of compassion in the Buddhist tradition that involves focusing on different levels of connection in our lives. The idea is to breathe in suffering and breathe out compassion. Though the exact descriptions vary, the first level is to focus on someone who has been kind to you; the second is on people you love; the third on your adversaries; the fourth on the powerless, such as children and animals; the fifth on those who suffer most in the world; the sixth on all sentient beings.

Invite participants to go through a brief Tonglen meditation together, led by the facilitator. Allow participants one to two minutes to focus on each level as you read them aloud:

I invite you now to find a comfortable position with both feet on the floor, a straight spine and your hands resting on your lap. Gently close your eyes. Begin to focus on your breath. (Pause to allow participants to settle into their breath and relax). Now bring to mind someone in your life who has been kind to you. As you hold their image in your mind, imagine that each time you inhale, you are breathing in their suffering and each time you exhale you are sending them love and compassion. (Allow participants 1-2 minutes to focus their breathing on this person).
Next, take a moment to bring to mind someone you love. As you hold their image in your mind, imagine that each time you inhale, you are breathing in their suffering and each time you exhale you are sending them love and compassion. (Allow participants 1-2 minutes to focus their breathing on this person).

Now, bring to mind someone in your life that you’ve experienced conflict with. As you hold their image in your mind, imagine that each time you inhale, you are breathing in their suffering and each time you exhale you are sending them love and compassion. (Allow participants 1-2 minutes to focus their breathing on this person).

Now, bring to mind those in your life who are powerless, such as children, animals, and the elderly. As you hold their images in your mind, imagine that each time you inhale, you are breathing in their suffering and each time you exhale you are sending them love and compassion. (Allow participants 1-2 minutes to focus their breathing on this person).

Now, bring to mind those who suffer most in the world, such as those who are starving, affected by war, or suffering from severe illness. As you hold their image in your mind, imagine that each time you inhale, you are breathing in their suffering and each time you exhale you are sending them love and compassion. (Allow participants 1-2 minutes to focus their breathing on this person).

Now, bring to mind all sentient beings. This includes everyone on our earth, including people, plants, animals, insects, and all creatures of the universe. As you hold their image in your mind, imagine that each time you inhale, you are breathing in their suffering and each time you exhale you are sending them love and compassion. (Allow participants 1-2 minutes to focus their breathing on this person).

Now bring awareness back into your body. Slowly move your fingers and toes. Gently open your eyes.

Ask participants to reflect on what they felt as they went through the practice. How did moving through the different level help or hurt your practice? What is the importance of including adversaries and the powerless?

Closing Ritual (call and repeat):
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May all beings be filled with loving-kindness
Facilitator: “Hold the loving-kindness that it inside of you, now share that loving-kindness with every being in this room (offer hands), now gather some more of your loving-kindness (hands to heart), now share your loving-kindness with all beings in the universe! (hands to the sky)
Day Three: Tolerance

Welcome participants and tell them today’s session number and how many sessions remain. After doing a brief check in to see how everyone is doing, tell them that today’s session will be about tolerance.

Ask: What does tolerance mean to you? After allowing participants to answer, read the following quotes from the Dalai Lama.

“We are all potential criminals, and those who we put into prison are no worse, deep down, than any one of us. They have succumbed to ignorance, desire and anger, ailments that we all suffer from, but to different degrees. Our duty is to help them recover.” -- The Dalai Lama

“We should consider that our competitors are also human beings and have the same rights and needs as ourselves. We should think that they too are members of our society. It is all the better if they are also successful.” -- The Dalai Lama

“In the practice of tolerance, one’s enemy is the best teacher.” -- The Dalai Lama

Questions for Discussion:
1. What thoughts come to mind after hearing the Dalai Lama’s words on tolerance?
2. People can usually recognize intolerance on a personal and community level. Can you think of examples of our New Orleans community demonstrating tolerance?
4. What are some of the ways, as a community, that New Orleanians might become more tolerant?
5. How might people practice tolerance towards themselves?

Activity:
Show a picture of Tibetan prayer flags or have actual prayer flags that may be passed around to each participant. Explain that it is important to the Dalai Lama and his followers that the flags not touch the ground, so please hold them very carefully. Explain that Tibetan prayer flags contain holy prayers and images on them that wish for peace and prosperity for all people. People hang these colorful flags in the wind and believe that the wind carries the prayers to everyone across the Earth.

Take time to write down the names of people to whom you want to send thoughts of tolerance and compassion on your prayer flags. In this way we can reflect on how we might be more tolerant to all people in our lives and in this world.
Consider including the following groups: people you love, people that have been kind to you, people that you have had difficulties with, people who are sick or suffering, all sentient beings (This can include bugs, plants, animals, and people in other countries)

As you hang these prayer flags outside your home or business, let them serve as a reminder of tolerance and inspire your thoughts and actions.

*The Dalai Lama outreach group is coordinating a city-wide prayer flag day on April 21. We encourage you to hang your flags outside in front of your homes or businesses and allow your thoughts of compassion and tolerance to be blown in the wind!

**Closing Ritual (call and repeat):**
May all beings be safe
May all beings be healthy
May all beings be happy
May all beings be filled with loving-kindness
Facilitator: “Hold the loving-kindness that it inside of you, now share that loving-kindness with every being in this room (offer hands), now gather some more of your loving-kindness (hands to heart), now share your loving-kindness with all beings in the universe! (hands to the sky)
Day Four: Forgiveness

Welcome participants and tell them today’s session number and how many sessions remain. After doing a brief check in to see how everyone is doing, tell them that today’s session will be about forgiveness and share with them the following quotes.

“All major religious traditions carry basically the same message, that is love, compassion and forgiveness. The important thing is they should be part of our daily lives.” -- The Dalai Lama

“The very purpose of religion is to control yourself, not to criticize others. Rather, we must criticize ourselves. How much am I doing about my anger, about my attachment, about my hatred, about my pride, my jealousy? These are the things which we must check in daily life.” -- The Dalai Lama

Questions for Discussion:
1. Why do you think it can be so hard to truly forgive?
2. What is the hardest thing you have ever had to forgive someone for? (Participants may choose to just reflect on this personally instead of sharing out loud. Allow them a moment of silence to do so).
3. How does forgiveness affect both the person doing the forgiving and the person being forgiven?

Activity:
Distribute paper and pens to all participants. Ask them to think of someone in their lives that they may need to show forgiveness to. Make it clear that this person may not even know that they need forgiveness, as they may be unaware of the anger or pain they have caused. Allow participants time to write a letter to this person. Explain that this letter does not need to ever be read by the intended recipient in order to be meaningful.

After, allow participants to share their letters if they desire.

Closing Ritual (call and repeat):
May all beings be safe
May all beings be healthy
May all beings be happy
May all beings be filled with loving-kindness
Facilitator: “Hold the loving-kindness that it inside of you, now share that loving-kindness with every being in this room (offer hands), now gather some more of your loving-kindness (hands to heart), now share your loving-kindness with all beings in the universe! (hands to the sky)
Welcome participants and tell them today’s session number and how many sessions remain. After doing a brief check in to see how everyone is doing, tell them that today’s session will be about resilience and share with them the following quotes.

“Whatever your situation is it is always possible to view it in a positive light, especially nowadays when modern technology gives us more reason to have hope. It is impossible not to find any way of changing our outlook to reduce suffering that has been caused by external circumstances. It is very rare to find a case where we only have reasons to suffer with no possibility of reassurance. When you are faced with physical pain think of the positive side, keep this in mind and it will certainly help to relieve your sadness.” -- The Dalai Lama

“We need to recognize that suffering is a part of life or, in Buddhist terms, of samsara, the cycle of conditioned existence. If we regard suffering as negative and abnormal, and consider ourselves its victims, then life becomes a misery. Our attitude is the problem. Happiness is possible only when what we call suffering no longer causes us distress.” --The Dalai Lama

Questions for Discussion:
1. What does resilience mean to you?
2. How has your community as a whole shown resilience in the face of struggle or adversity?
3. What is the opposite of resilience? What might this look like in a person? Can you think of anyone who meets this description?
4. What are some ways to foster resilience within yourself and your community?

Activity:
Resilience Story Circle

Introduction to Story Circles:
The power and practice of storytelling has been passed down through various cultures and generations as a method of connecting, healing, and empowering communities. The methodology of story circles was developed during the Civil Rights movement as a tool to organize communities, face social issues, build common memory and instigate social change. They were used by the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee to amplify and unify the voices of those fighting for social justice. Story circles have specific guidelines that have been developed to maximize these aims. These are covered below.

Story Circles have four stages:
1) Introduction
2) Listening and Telling Stories
3) Cross-Talk
4) Call to Action

**Story Circle Guidelines:**
[taken from Junebug Productions, *Using art and theater to support organizing for justice*]

Make sure the guidelines are read aloud.

- Everyone sits in circles of no more than ten. The optimal group is six.
- Each participant receives an equal amount of time to tell her/his story. The amount of time allowed varies depending on the size of the group and the total amount of time available.
- The storytelling proceeds in order around the circle.
- If a participant does not have a story when it is his/her turn, the participant may pass. After the last person in the circle has told a story or passed, the participants who passed will have another opportunity to tell a story.
- *Listening is more important than talking.* Everyone should listen to the storyteller of the moment — not talk, ask questions, or even think about her/his own story. It is not necessary to think about what story to tell. Usually a story will emerge through the process. Trust the circle to bring you a story.
- If you have several stories in mind when it is your turn to tell, choose the story that comes from the deepest place that you feel safe telling.
- It is not necessary to like the story that others tell; however, it is important to respect the person’s right to tell it.
- After everyone who wishes to tell a story has had an opportunity to do so, participants may engage in cross talk, ask questions, or comment on the stories of others.
- Silence is all right. Take your time. Do not rush to tell.

Prompt: Tell a story about a time when you, someone you know, or your community showed resilience. [Note: facilitator may want to have his or her story prepared ahead of time to start the circle.]

For transformative action piece, explain that self-care is an important component of building resilience. Have the group go around the circle and share one thing he or she will do during the next week for self-care.

Thank the group for sharing.

**Closing Ritual (call and repeat):**
May all beings be safe
May all beings be healthy
May all beings be happy
May all beings be filled with loving-kindness

Facilitator: “Hold the loving-kindness that it inside of you, now share that loving-kindness with every being in this room (offer hands), now gather some more of your loving-kindness (hands to heart), now share your loving-kindness with all beings in the universe! (hands to the sky)
Welcome participants and tell them today’s session number and that today is the last time they will be meeting about these topics. After doing a brief check in to see how everyone is doing, tell them that today’s session will be about happiness and share with them the following quotes.

“If your attitude is not right, then even if you are surrounded by good friends and the best facilities, you cannot be happy. This is why mental attitude is more important than external conditions. Despite this, it seems to me that many people are more concerned about their external conditions and neglect the inner attitude of mind. I suggest that we should pay more attention to our inner qualities.” -- The Dalai Lama

“In order to have lasting happiness, we first need to acknowledge the reality of suffering. This may be depressing to begin with, but it works in the long run. Although some people prefer to avoid facing reality by taking drugs, by seeking false states of bliss through directionless spiritual paths, or by living life in the fast lane so they have no time to think deeply, they only experience a short reprieve. When their problems come back in force they find themselves at sea and ‘fill the land with lamentations,’ as we say in Tibet. Anger or despair takes them over, compounding their initial difficulty with pointless suffering.” -- The Dalai Lama

Questions for Discussion:
1. What are some non-external things that bring you happiness?
2. What are some of the actions you take to make yourself happy? What about to make other happy?
3. Think of someone you know who you would describe as happy. What characteristics do they have that made you choose this person?

Activity:
Tell participants that they have two options: journal a list of thing for which you are grateful OR make a card for something in your life who brings you happiness or to whom you would like to bring happiness. Be creative.

Remind participants that, like the Dalai Lama says, “Happiness is not ready made. It comes from your own actions.” Happiness is a choice that we make each day. Ask participants what choices they want to start making to bring themselves happiness, and ask them how this experience of participating in the group may have contributed to their happiness.

Thank the participants for sharing this journey with you.

Closing Ritual (call and repeat):

Day Six: Happiness
May all beings be safe
May all beings be healthy
May all beings be happy
May all beings be filled with loving-kindness
Facilitator: “Hold the loving-kindness that it inside of you, now share that loving-kindness with every being in this room (offer hands), now gather some more of your loving-kindness (hands to heart), now share your loving-kindness with all beings in the universe! (hands to the sky)