



center for contemplative research

Executive Summary — 2024

The Center for Contemplative Research (CCR) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit religious organization founded in 2021 by scholars B. Alan Wallace, PhD and Eva Natanya, PhD. The CCR maintains its primary center in Crestone, Colorado, with other centers underway in Italy and New Zealand.

The founding vision of the CCR posits that the problems of human civilization stem from mental affliction, and that to address the crises humanity faces and bring about a new era of human flourishing, we must address their root causes in the mind. The CCR sees a future guided by collaborative, cross-cultural, and interdisciplinary inquiry, where scientists and contemplatives work together in mutual respect to fathom the nature and potentials of the mind and seek to discover and implement the sustainable causes of personal and social well-being.

The mission of the CCR is to develop, apply, and proliferate methods of contemplative science — through **expert training**, **collaborative research**, and **accessible education** — to deepen empirical understanding of genuine well-being, further the exploration of the nature and potentials of consciousness, and offer accessible tools for flourishing to the world.

To provide science with more replicable and high-resolution methods for studying the mind directly, the Center for Contemplative Research (CCR) has established a series of **Mind Labs**, retreat centers where contemplatives-in-training complete thousands of hours of full-time meditation to achieve exceptional attention skills and introspective acuity. The CCR's primary location in Crestone, Colorado is a remote 110-acre hermitage near the Sangre de Cristo mountain range that holds a rich history of inter-faith tradition and is an exceptionally conducive environment for long-term retreat. All of the retreatants have their own private cabins, far from any noise or distractions. The CCR is actively developing similar sites in other countries around the world. The CCR contemplatives-in-training are unique in that they're engaged in full-time retreats, meditating 8–12 hours a day under world-class instruction, in contribution to the emergent field of contemplative science. Never before has there been an international community of meditators who have been engaged in full-time, multi-year retreats under expert guidance while being open to longitudinal collaboration with the scientific community.

To realize the full potential of **contemplative science**, the CCR is developing a **research** program that treats contemplatives-in-training, active at our retreat centers, not as mere participants in

neuroscientific protocols but as scientific colleagues who can produce unique forms of empirical evidence, which can be integrated with the traditional third-person methods of science. The **Pilot Study** will last 45 months and involve 20 participants, using both phenomenological and electrophysiological methods to examine the experiences of individuals engaged in full-time, long-term meditation retreat. This study embraces the CCR's novel approach to data collection: first-person data (e.g. reflective journal-writing), second-person data (e.g. recorded observations by teachers and technicians), and third-person data (e.g. psychological questionnaires and EEG brainwave recordings during meditation). This approach will identify consistent evidence within each method but also convergent evidence across methods. This integration of evidence will likely help identify connections between consciousness and various physical processes, with potential implications for the mind-body problem in neuroscience, the measurement problem in quantum mechanics, and a variety of research questions related to health and well-being. **The Sixfold Matrix of Mental Balance** is the conceptual framework that guides the CCR research work. The CCR conducts mental-balance research, applying methods for cultivating genuine well-being based on contemplative insight across the entire spectrum of mental health by measuring hyperactivity, deficit, and dysfunction across six dimensions: conation, ethics, attention, cognition, emotion, and spirituality. Conation, a volitional capacity foundational to human experience, is an under-researched field of psychology that the CCR prioritizes as crucial to understand more deeply. Acknowledging the often disparate worldviews and motivations associated with the world's scientific and contemplative traditions, The CCR develops a **Code of Ethics** that offers practical guidelines for ensuring that collaboration between practitioners of these traditions remain safe and mutually respectful, honoring all participants' potential for making genuine discoveries that can be evaluated via intersubjective critique. The CCR is also currently developing a *micropublication* system through which contemplatives-in-training can document, share, and publish their discoveries, bringing their work into active conversation with other research literature and developing an enduring corpus of contemplative insight for analysis.

To deepen empirical understanding of genuine well-being, and further the exploration of the nature and potential of consciousness, the CCR provides accessible **educational** tools through curriculum development and community building, also framed by the Sixfold Matrix of Mental Balance. The CCR postulates that a move toward genuine well-being must start with ethical conduct, grounded in the conative self-inquiry made possible by time-tested contemplative tools for exploring inner experience and cultivating resilience, creativity, and contentment. The CCR develops curriculum and training modules in reflective and contemplative methods, grounded in deep pedagogical and psychological expertise, that span the six domains of mental health: conative, ethical, attentional, emotional, cognitive, and spiritual. The initial program will begin with a short course on conation, to be piloted among university-age young adults, and expand to content offerings across all dimensions from there.

Through **expert training, collaborative research, and accessible education**, the CCR leads the way for another scientific revolution, made possible if we relax a constraint in science: that empirical

knowledge must come from only the five physical senses of touch, sight, hearing, smell, and taste. The CCR seeks to demonstrate that our sixth mode of experience — mental perception — is a valid avenue of empirical inquiry and thus a legitimate mode of scientific exploration. Establishing mental perception as a part of science creates the possibility for a deeper, more integrative foundation for inter-contemplative dialogue. Seeking common ground that is reached through the rigorous and replicable experiences that arise from practice — not merely from a comparison of texts, rituals, or belief systems — the CCR seeks to overturn dogmatism in both religion and academia, and to arrive at the deepest truths of existence through radical empiricism, while never forsaking heart-opening faith in the honesty and integrity of the great teachers, saints, and prophets who have preceded us, pointing the way to what they have seen. It is the CCR's hope that this common ground inspires invigoration and application of contemplative techniques and deep discovery across traditions, toward better human flourishing in the face of ever-steepening odds.