

# Reshaping Self–Other Representation: The Effect of Compassion Meditation on Peripersonal Space

*Saturday, September 13, 2025 2:10 PM (20 minutes)*

**Introduction.** Mindfulness meditation has been shown to enhance social skills (Luberto et al., 2017; Trautwein et al., 2013), as compassion (Gilbert, 2020; Sinclair, 2021). Together, these practices are hypothesized to influence self–other representation: mindfulness reduces self-centeredness, while compassion increases connection with others (Trautwein et al., 2013). This study examines how compassion meditation affects self–other representation by investigating changes in peripersonal space (PPS), the space immediately surrounding the body, using an audio-tactile interaction task (Serino et al., 2007).

PPS is known to be dynamically modulated by social interactions. We hypothesize that even a brief, 15-minute compassion meditation can alter the size and shape of PPS.

**Methods.** Twenty-five non-meditators completed the audio-tactile task before and after the meditation. During the task, participants were exposed to dynamic, task-irrelevant sound while receiving tactile stimuli on the cheek at five different delays. Reaction times (RTs) to tactile stimuli, depending on the perceived proximity of the sound, were used to estimate PPS characteristics.

**Results.** Following the meditation, a significant reduction in PPS extent was observed, suggesting a shift in self–other boundaries. This contraction may reflect a reduced need for defensive distancing, consistent with theories positing PPS as a protective space (Graziano & Cooke, 2006; Taffou et al., 2014).

**Conclusions.** Contemplative practices reshape bodily and relational awareness even in the absence of direct social interaction. This approach is in line with the pattern theory of compassion (Gallagher et al., 2024), which highlights the interaction of cognitive, emotional, and relational elements in cultivating compassion.

**If you're submitting a symposium talk, what's the symposium title?**

**If you're submitting a symposium, or a talk that is part of a symposium, is this a junior symposium?**

**Primary authors:** CHIARELLA, Salvatore Gaetano (Department of International Humanities and Social Sciences, UNINT, Rome, Italy); DE PASTINA, riccardo (Sapienza Università di Roma)

**Co-authors:** RAFFONE, Antonino (Università degli Studi di Roma La Sapienza); SIMIONE, Luca (Università degli studi Internazionali di Roma)

**Presenter:** DE PASTINA, riccardo (Sapienza Università di Roma)

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