HOLSTEE

Compassion Guide

Exploring the art and science of Compassion

Compassion

In our state of perpetual "busyness" we're constantly measured by how efficient and active we are. What is immeasurable is the impact and value of the slower – often invisible – acts of compassion that connect us.

Every act of compassion creates a ripple effect that expands beyond ourselves to beings large and small.

Compassion noun

com·pas·sion | kəm-'pa-shən

Sympathetic consciousness of others' distress together with a desire to alleviate it.

Merriam-Webster Dictionary © 2020

In this guide, we explore how Compassion can enhance our relationship with ourselves and others.

On the following pages, we share poetry, philosophy, and a range of activities to help you reflect on the role Compassion plays in your life.

Dive into the modern teachings and scientific findings by Dr. Kristin Neff, Dr. Chris Peterson, and Dr. Heidi Wayment — just to name a few. Learn how to activate self-compassion, develop a "quiet ego," and practice a loving-kindness meditation to lead a compassioncentered life.

Use this guide as a tool to grow your mindfulness practice and create deeper dialogue with your community.

Shoulder

A man crosses the street in rain, stepping gently, looking two times north and south, because his son is asleep on his shoulder.

No car must splash him. No car drive too near to his shadow.

This man carries the world's most sensitive cargo but he's not marked. Nowhere does his jacket say FRAGILE, HANDLE WITH CARE.

His ear fills up with breathing. He hears the hum of a boy's dream deep inside him.

We're not going to be able to live in this world if we're not willing to do what he's doing with one another.

The road will only be wide. The rain will never stop falling.

Warm-Up

We'll begin by reflecting on what compassion actually is. We can show compassion to ourselves, to those around us, and even to those on the other side of the world. Distinct from empathy, and more nuanced than simply being nice, compassion requires **feeling** and **action**.

Jot down the names of compassionate individuals and list their positive qualities. Then, underline the qualities you also see in yourself.

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"Self-compassion entails both yin and yang — it is tender and helps us heal but it can also be fierce..."

DR. KRISTIN NEFF

Self-Compassion

"Put on your own oxygen mask first."

This wisdom is worth applying outside the aircraft as well. Buddhist teachings remind us that we need to care for ourselves before we can properly care for others.

Modern science shows that, specifically, self-compassion motivates us more effectively than self-punishment. Dr. Kristin Neff, researcher, writer, and Co-founder of the Center for Mindful Self-Compassion even suggests that it should take the place of 'self-esteem' in our vocabulary. She says that it "offers the same protection against harsh self-criticism as self-esteem, but *without* the need to see ourselves as perfect or as better than others." Self-compassion asks us to see ourselves as whole and worthy of love without being influenced by the judgment of others, whether those judgments are positive or negative.

In this section we'll build ourselves up rather than cut ourselves down, be a true friend rather than our own worst enemy, and finally learn to practice more self-compassion.

The following exercise created by Dr. Neff will help us become more aware of our mental narrative, encourage flexibility of perspective, and become our own "compassionate observer."

Tip: Your body language and posture often reflect feelings, especially negative ones. Be aware of this and take note of how emotions look and feel in the body. It might help you understand what you're feeling and better work through it.

The Criticizer, The Criticized, and The Compassionate Observer

For this exercise we recommend you sit in three different chairs to really connect with these conflicting parts of yourself and experience how each aspect feels in the present moment.

The Criticizer

Take a seat in the first chair. Think about a personal flaw or issue that comes up in your daily life. Write down what the self-critical part of you is thinking and feeling.

Example: "Why are you such a wimp?", "How could you do (or not do) such a thing?" or "You aren't assertive enough."

Take a moment to note the **words** you use, the **emotions** you feel, and even the **body posture** you take in this seat.

The Criticized

Take a seat in the second chair. Try to articulate how you feel when you're criticized this way, responding directly to your inner critic.

Example: "This makes me feel small," "I feel ashamed," or "I feel unsupported." **Just write whatever comes to mind.**

The Compassionate Observer

Now allow your heart to soften and open. Move into the third chair where the compassionate observer sits. What compassionate observations or words naturally spring forth? What wisdom do you have for the criticizer? For the criticized?

Again, notice the **language** you used. Is it sad, discouraged, childlike, scared, helpless? What was your **posture** like?

To become a compassionate observer, it's important to keep what you felt and learned during the exercise in mind moving forward.

According to habit expert Dr. Art Markman, it is helpful to set triggers that remind us of the habit we want to create, like self-compassion postit notes around our workplace and home (or maybe a piece of Holstee art!). Eventually, if we keep self-compassion in our awareness and continually practice it, the behavior will become a habit that will help us live our best lives.

"Love makes your soul crawl out from its hiding place."

ZORA NEALE HURSTON

A Friend In Me

Dr. Kristin Neff has spent much of her life studying self-compassion and developing programs to help people relate to themselves with greater kindness.

Based on her research, Dr. Neff breaks self-compassion into three elements:

1. Self-Kindness vs Self-Judgment

Self-compassion entails seeing ourselves as imperfect and responding with kindness when confronted with failure, suffering, or feelings of inadequacy. Self-compassion urges us to **accept that things will not always go as we hope, that we can't always be or get exactly what we want** – and that's OK.

2. Common Humanity vs Isolation

Our challenging moments often bring up feelings of isolation — that we're the only one experiencing hurt, making mistakes, or feeling pain. But our **vulnerability and fragility is what makes us human, and recognizing that helps us feel connected to a larger human experience**. Dr. Neff writes, "having compassion for yourself means that you honor and accept your humanness."

3. Mindfulness vs Over-Identification

This element of self-compassion is all about seeking equanimity in our emotions. Like so many aspects of our lives, self-compassion is all about balance. **We shouldn't avoid or deny negative feelings, but try to receive them without judgment**. At the same time, we should be mindful not to get caught up in them. One exercise Dr. Neff recommends for practicing self-compassion is to reflect on how you treat a close friend when they are suffering. Often, we're quicker to accept and forgive a friend for their flaws and mistakes than we are our own.

Step One: Reflect on your life in this moment. What are your **challenges** and **weaknesses**? What are your **biggest pain points**?

Step Two: Imagine how you would respond if a close friend was feeling and experiencing those exact things. What would you say? How would you feel as they confided in you? What words of comfort or encouragement would you offer?

Dear friend,

"If we have no peace, it is because we have forgotten that we belong to each other."

MOTHER TERESA

Quiet Ego

Drs. Heidi Wayment and Jack J. Bauer, authors and professors of psychology, have researched and written on the value of developing a "quiet ego." When we have a quiet (but not silent) ego, we are able to do a better job of "listening to others as well as the self in an effort to approach life more humanely and compassionately."

If you want others to be happy, practice compassion. If you want to be happy, practice compassion.

DALAI LAMA XIV

Example: Or d

With their research, they created the **Quiet Ego Scale** (QES) to help us assess our tendencies and behavior. The more statements we find ourselves agreeing with on the QES spectrum, the more likely it is that we are leading satisfying, balanced lives with more non-defensive, flexible, and inclusive worldviews. The QES can also help us identify a few clear steps towards developing a quiet ego and living more compassionately.

Read through the following statements and mark a check \checkmark next to any statement that you feel **you have a good handle on**.

Draw a circle around any you want to focus on with more intention.

- □ I often pay attention when I am doing things.
- □ I feel a connection to all living things.
- □ I don't do jobs or tasks automatically, I am aware of what I'm doing.
- I don't rush through activities without being really attentive to them.
- □ I feel a connection with strangers.
- □ I feel a connection to people of other races.
- Before criticizing somebody, I try to imagine how I would feel if I were in their place.
- □ When I'm upset at someone, I usually try to put myself in his or her shoes for a while.
- □ I try to look at everybody's side of a disagreement before I make a decision.
- □ I find it easy to see things from another person's point of view.
- □ For me, life has been a continuous process of learning, changing, and growth.
- □ I think it is important to have new experiences that challenge how I think about myself and the world.
- □ I have the sense that I have developed as a person over time.

"Better than a thousand meaningless statements Is one meaningful word, Which, having been heard, Brings peace."

GIL FRONSDAL

Nonviolent Communication

Compassion brings us to a moment when we stop, and for a moment we rise above ourselves.

MASON COOLEY

Humans are innately social creatures with a fundamental need to connect with others. So it's no surprise that the quality of our relationships is one of the best predictors of our overall well-being. As positive psychology superstar Dr. Chris Peterson put it, "Other people matter," and compassion is exactly the kind of spiritual technology that helps us connect with those around us.

Reflect on a moment when someone offered completely unexpected kindness and compassion to you in a moment of need. What impact did it have on you? Why?

Thought Starter

You don't need us to outline all the ways in which we're lacking in compassion in our world today. We see it in the news, in our daily interactions, and in the media we consume.

But one of the best ways we can bring compassion into our lives and those around us is simply in the way we talk to one another – more specifically with the use of Nonviolent Communication (NVC).

Guided by the Center for Nonviolent Communication and its founder, Dr. Marshall B. Rosenberg, here's a short overview.

We'll begin by breaking down the Four Components:

Observation

Noticing concrete things and actions around us without judgment or evaluation, which helps us stay in the present moment, break patterns of assumption, and avoid leading with critique.

With Evaluation:

My friend is always flaky and won't answer my calls or texts.

Without Evaluation: My friend didn't answer my call or text yesterday.

Tip: Avoid using words like *always*, *never*, *frequently*, or *rarely* – be specific.

Feeling

Our emotions and sensations in the present moment, expressed with honesty. When we begin a sentence with "I feel..." we're not necessarily expressing a feeling, we may be describing a thought about how someone is or tends to behave towards us.

Expressing a Thought:

I feel that my friend is ignoring me when she doesn't answer my calls.

Expressing a Feeling: In this moment, I feel sad and maybe even a little lonely.

Tip: Avoid using words like *that*, *like*, and *as if* – these often signal thoughts, not feelings.

Needs

How our needs are or aren't met shapes our experiences. We often see our feelings as caused by someone or something, but in doing so we place blame. The goal is to distinguish between a stimulus (a person or event) and the cause (the met or unmet needs) behind the feelings.

Placing Blame:

You make me upset when you ignore my calls.

Identifying a Need:

I feel sad because I really wanted to spend time with you but couldn't.

Tip: The hard work of compassion is in trying to understand hurtful actions in a way that helps us move forward with empathy.

Request

A clear and present request for concrete action that can be carried out in the given moment. This request should be made simply, precisely, and without making a demand.

Unclear Demand: I wish you would stop ignoring me all the time. Making a Request:

Would you be willing to set a date we can spend time together this week?

The Four Components of NVC come together in this simple model:

When I see that observation, I feel emotion because my need for need is/is not met. Would you be willing to request?

This is the core of NVC, and may feel daunting or even cheesy at first. Begin with one component — maybe expressing feelings instead of thoughts, or reflecting on your needs with honesty.

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Take a moment to fill in the blank above using a recent scenario you found yourself in or an imagined future conflict. How might it change your interaction?

"Our human compassion binds us the one to the other — not in pity or patronizingly, but as human beings who have learnt how to turn our common suffering into hope for the future."

NELSON MANDELA

Loving–Kindness Meditation

Dr. Emma Seppala of Stanford University's Center for Compassion and Altruism Research and Education (CCARE) believes in a near-future where "the practice of compassion is understood to be as important for health as physical exercise and a healthful diet."

CCARE researchers have found that our natural instinct to act with compassion can be improved upon with a compassion-centered and Buddhist-inspired "loving-kindness" meditation practice. In fact, Dr. Seppala and a colleague discovered that:

A seven-minute intervention was enough to increase feelings of closeness and connection to the target of meditation on both explicit measures, but also on implicit measures that participants could not voluntarily control; this suggests that their sense of connection had changed on a deep-seated level.

Tip: We recommend reading the instructions on the next two pages all the way through before starting, so that you can complete the exercise without needing to open your eyes and interrupt the meditation.

To begin, find a quiet, comfortable, and safe place where you can be free of distractions for at **least 7–10 minutes**. Find a position for your body that is upright, but not uptight, and then start guiding your awareness to your breath. Take 5-10 deep and soothing breaths, keeping your attention on the full length of your **inhale** and *exhale*.

First, direct your compassion toward yourself.

Repeat these phrases silently in your mind at a slow and comfortable pace at least **three times**.

MANTRA A

May I be well May I be happy May I be kind May I be loved

Next, send a similar compassionate mantra to someone close to you.

Choose a best friend, family member, or even a pet and repeat the love and kindness mantras with them in mind. Repeat these phrases silently in your mind at a slow and comfortable pace at least **three times**.

MANTRA B

May you be well May you be happy May you be kind May you be loved Move the focus of your compassion to someone you don't know as well.

Maybe think of a friend of a friend or a coworker. Be kind to yourself if this does not come easily, but try sending positivity to that person.

Repeat MANTRA B at least three times.

Next, open your circle of compassion up to someone that you are angry with or even someone you consider to be an adversary.

This can be very difficult, but oftentimes this tends to be an especially therapeutic element of this practice. Give it a try and see if it feels right for you.

Repeat MANTRA B in your mind three times.

Lastly, extend your compassion to all humanity.

Imagine your compassion and loving kindness radiating outward to all the people near you, and then to people further and further away until you're effectively wishing well to every human being on planet earth.

Repeat MANTRA B three times.

How did it feel? Was it easy? Wonderful! Was it difficult and did you feel silly at any point? Understandable — many do when they first give it a try. But the repetition of this exercise can be a powerful way to elevate your mood and help you connect to those around you.

"A truce can be called in your inner war. Peace is possible. Your old habits of selfcriticism don't need to rule you forever. What you need to do is listen to the voice that's already there, even if a bit hidden your wise, compassionate self."

DR. KRISTIN NEFF

Reflect & Discuss

Use these questions for self-reflection or to spark meaningful conversations.

ICEBREAKERS

Describe a time when a stranger went out of their way to do something kind for you.

Is compassion learned or inherent?

Do you find it more challenging to be kind to yourself or others? DEEPER QUESTIONS

When was the last time you had to forgive someone?

What is a small but powerful act of compassion?

When did you last connect with someone who has different political, spiritual, or cultural views than you?

Do intentions matter more or less than actions?

We are each made for goodness, love and compassion. Our lives are transformed as much as the world is when we live with these truths.

DESMOND TUTU

Copyright © Holstee Inc. 2020 – This kit is inspired by our readings from Naomi Shihab Nye, Dr. Kristin Neff, Dr. Art Markman, Zora Neale Hurston, Mother Teresa, Dr. Heidi Wayment, Dr. Jack J. Bauer, Dalai Lama XIV, Gil Fronsdal, Mason Cooley, Dr. Chris Peterson, Dr. Marshall B. Rosenberg, Nelson Mandela, Dr. Emma Seppala, and Desmond Tutu. For further reading and curated resources visit: holstee.com/compassion.