

COMPASSION

“Compassion: Deep awareness of the suffering of another coupled with the wish to relieve it.”

Dictionary.com

COMPASSION

“This is the sum of duty: do not do to others what would cause pain if done to you.”

Mahabharata 5:1517

COMPASSION

“I must learn to love the fool in me—the one who feels too much, talks too much, takes too many chances, loves and hates, hurts and gets hurt, promises and breaks promises, laughs, and cries.”

Theodore Isaac Rubin

COMPASSION

“In cultivating compassion, we draw from the wholeness of our experience—suffering, our empathy, as well as our cruelty and terror.... Compassion is not a relationship between the healer and the wounded. It's a relationship between equals.”

Pema Chodron

COMPASSION

“When people shine a light on their monster, we find out how similar most of our monsters are.... When people let their monsters out... it turns out that we've all done or thought the same things, that this is our lot, this is our condition.”

Anne Lamott

COMPASSION

“My own suffering is the grounds for empathy.”

Piero Ferrucci

COMPASSION

“Our task must be to free ourselves... by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty. Nobody is able to achieve this completely, but the striving for such achievement is in itself a part of the liberation and a foundation for inner security.”

Albert Einstein

COMPASSION

“A person with *ubuntu* is open and available to others, affirming to others, does not feel threatened that others are able and good, for he or she... [knows] he or she belongs in a greater whole and is diminished when others are humiliated or diminished... or treated as if they were less than who they are.”

Desmond Tutu

COMPASSION

“A selfless deed, witnessed up close, is like a lamp blazing up from darkness before your pupils can adjust.”

Marc Ian Barasch

To discuss

Self-compassion involves self-kindness and understanding that we are part of a common (and imperfect) humanity. How can you practice more self-compassion?

To do

Do one kind thing for yourself each day.



To discuss

What role does compassion and/or the "Golden Rule" play in your religion, spiritual practice, or life philosophy?

To do

Think of a person you find difficult. The next time you are with that person, practice the Golden Rule. Notice how the dynamic changes when you do this.



To discuss

What does compassion mean to you? How have you experienced it?

To do

Explore the Charter for Compassion website, charterforcompassion.org. Read about others' compassionate actions and commitments. Add your own.



To discuss

How has your own suffering enlarged your capacity to be compassionate toward others?

To do

Contemplate key events in your life that caused you suffering and what that has taught you about empathy and compassion.



To discuss

What "monsters" are you hiding?

To do

Sit quietly. Think about those aspects of yourself you don't like. Don't judge them, but instead come to them with kindness and forgiveness. Return to this practice when you find you are judging yourself harshly.



To discuss

How does accepting yourself, with all of your imperfections, help or hurt your ability to relate to others as equals?

To do

Observe what you say to yourself today about your mistakes or shortcomings.



To discuss

What selfless deeds have you done for or received from others? What was that like for you?

To do

Do one "selfless deed" each day for a week.



To discuss

In the Bantu languages of South Africa, saying someone has *ubuntu* is high praise. Is there a concept like that in your language or culture?

To do

Consider how you can be more affirming to others.



To discuss

Do you think feeling separate from others is real or a delusion? Why?

To do

Help a stranger today. It can be as simple as opening a door, carrying a package, letting that person go in front of you in line, or saying "hello." Broaden your circle of compassion.



COMPASSION

“Cultivate compassion all day and everyday. Now, when things are difficult, it’s time to practice.”

Karen Armstrong

COMPASSION

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

His Holiness the Dalai Lama

COMPASSION

“If only we can overcome cruelty, to human and animal, with love and compassion we shall stand at the threshold of a new era in human moral and spiritual evolution—and realize, at last, our most unique quality: humanity.”

Jane Goodall

COMPASSION

“Only other wounded people can understand what is needed, for the healing of suffering is compassion, not expertise.”

Rachel Naomi Remen

COMPASSION

“Although the world is full of suffering, it is full also of the overcoming of it.”

Helen Keller

COMPASSION

“I am the Lorax. I speak for the trees. I speak for the trees for the trees have no tongues.”

The Lorax / Dr. Seuss

COMPASSION

“True compassion is born of the truth that we are one; that separateness is illusion; that we are infinite beings. . . . From this place of deep humility, we can draw limitless strength, and endless compassion.”

charterforcompassion.org

COMPASSION

“The greatest distance in the world is the 14 inches from our minds to our hearts.”

Agnes Baker Pilgrim

COMPASSION

“

”

To discuss

What have you learned about care and compassion from animals and other living beings?

To do

If you have an animal, give it your full attention for ten minutes today. If you don't have an animal, spend some time appreciating the natural world: visit a park, look at the nature you pass on the way to school or work, or out a window.



To discuss

Who are your role models of compassion and why?

To do

Write down when you've been a role model of compassion and how that felt.



To discuss

Why is practicing compassion more important when things are difficult? What one thing can you commit to do each day to be more compassionate to yourself and others?

To do

Do that one thing.



To discuss

Who or what might you "speak for" who has no voice?

To do

Do one thing this week to nurture an animal or help preserve the natural world.



To discuss

How do you navigate news and experiences of suffering each day?

To do

Think of someone you know or know of who is suffering in some way. Try to imagine what life is like for them. See if you can come up with one thing you can do to make today better for them. Then, do it.



To discuss

How do painful experiences affect your capacity to be compassionate toward others?

To do

Observe, without judgment, how you react to your own and others' suffering today.



To discuss

To do



To discuss

Share an experience when you listened to your mind over your heart. When should you listen to your heart? Your mind?

To do

List some recent situations when your heart or your mind dictated your actions. Note instances when you might allow your heart to lead more of your actions.



To discuss

What role does humility play in acting compassionately?

To do

Commit an anonymous act of compassion.



FORGIVENESS

“We must develop and maintain the capacity to forgive. The one who is devoid of the power to forgive is devoid of the power to love. Forgiveness is not an occasional act. It is a permanent attitude.”

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

FORGIVENESS

“Never forget that to forgive yourself is to release trapped energy that could be doing good work in the world.”

D. Patrick Miller

FORGIVENESS

“When you cannot forgive, you are a prisoner of the hurt done to you. If you are really disappointed in someone and you become embittered, you become incarcerated inside that feeling. Only the grace of forgiveness can break the straight logic of hurt and embitterment.”

John O'Donohue

FORGIVENESS

“Every day you don't forgive, it's as if you are ingesting tiny bits of poison.”

Harold Bloomfield

FORGIVENESS

“For both parties, forgiveness means the freedom to be at peace inside their own skins and to be glad in each other's presence.”

Frederick Buechner

FORGIVENESS

“The past is over. Forgiveness means giving up all hope of a better past.”

Jack Kornfield

FORGIVENESS

“Often the most difficult part of forgiving another is facing the fact that we don't actually want to forgive them. Yet the process of forgiveness also requires that we experience, within ourselves, the fact that we are not so different from those we are so ready to judge.”

Ezra Bayda

FORGIVENESS

“I heard a wise saying once that has helped me: 'Negative feelings are like stray cats. The more you feed them, the more they hang around.'”

Joyce Rupp

FORGIVENESS

“When we refuse to give ourselves permission to be anything but perfect—as if failure did not bring its own lessons in life—we certainly are not able to forgive anyone else.”

Joan Chittister

To discuss

Is it natural (i.e., logical, sensible) to forgive? What is the most common incentive for forgiveness?

To do

Look truthfully at one hurt that you have not been able to forgive. Are certain feelings or activities not possible as long as you do not forgive? Reflect upon how not forgiving is constricting your ability to move forward.



To discuss

What kinds of things do you tend to hold onto—mistakes, disappointments, slights, hurts, etc.?

To do

Identify a situation you wish you had handled differently. Imagine how you would feel if you no longer thought about it. Redirect the energy you are devoting to replaying that situation to a more positive interest.



To discuss

On a scale of 1-10, how easy do you find it to forgive? Why is forgiveness so difficult?

To do

Think of something or someone you have forgiven. Were you able to forgive once and for all time? If not, forgive again.



To discuss

In what areas of your life do you tend to seek "do-overs"?

To do

Live in the present. Practice speaking in the present tense. Avoid phrases such as *if only*, *could have*, *should have*, *would have*, *could be*, *should be*, *must be*, *will be*, *going to*.



To discuss

When have you felt the release and peace of a reconciled relationship?

To do

Visit, call, or write someone you have forgiven, and celebrate your having repaired the breach in your relationship.



To discuss

What are some physical symptoms associated with an inability to forgive? Recall a time when you experienced one of them and the cause of it.

To do

Pay attention to how you feel physically when you forgive someone.



To discuss

What lessons have you learned from failure, especially in your relationships?

To do

Make a list of major grievances in your life. Highlight all those that spring from your need to avoid failure and feel successful.



To discuss

What are some negative feelings that you find very easy to feed? What cultural and/or familial reasons make them hard to resist?

To do

Identify one grudge or old argument that you can let go. Resolve not to pay it any more attention.



To discuss

What role does empathy play in forgiveness? When have you been able to put yourself in another's shoes?

To do

Bring to mind a person who has hurt or offended you. Ask yourself: *What qualities does this person possess that I would like to eliminate in myself?*



FORGIVENESS

“The stupid neither forgive nor forget; the naive forgive and forget; the wise forgive, but do not forget.”

Thomas Szasz

FORGIVENESS

“Forgiveness makes us one with the human family and allows us to live in the sunlight of the present, not the darkness of the past. Forgiveness alone, of all our human actions, opens up the world to the miracle of infinite possibility.”

Kent Nerburn

FORGIVENESS

“Contemporary culture puts a premium on revenge. Retaliation is portrayed as a mark of strength, a sign of equality, and a way to exact our due. Yet the truth is just the opposite. Only the brave can forgive from the heart.”

Dolores Wood

FORGIVENESS

“Anger is the great impediment to forgiveness. When anger is rooted out, love and forgiveness arise naturally.”

Brenda Shoshanna

FORGIVENESS

“It is never too late to go quietly to our lakes, rivers, oceans, even our small streams, and say to the sea gulls, the great blue herons, the bald eagles, the salmon, that we are sorry.”

Brenda Peterson

FORGIVENESS

“Ordinary people forgive best if they go at it in bits and pieces, and for specific acts. They bog down if they try to forgive people in the grand manner, because wholesale forgiving is almost always fake. Forgiving anything at all is a minor miracle; forgiving carte blanche is silly. Nobody can do it.”

Lewis Smedes

FORGIVENESS

“Please forgive me. I forgive you. Thank you. I love you. These four simple statements are powerful tools for improving your relationships and your life.”

Ira Byock

FORGIVENESS

“Within six months of her murder, all three of us children said that we forgave the person who did this. This is a testament to my mom and dad and to the teaching that they successfully conveyed. Forgiving was honoring her.”

Everett Worthington
on the murder of his mother

FORGIVENESS

“

”

To discuss

Who can serve as mentors of forgiveness in our society? How can you get them some press?

To do

Monitor TV and movie listings to see how many story lines revolve around revenge. Talk with your friends and family about the dangers of this trend.



To discuss

Do you tend to be optimistic or pessimistic about the future of the human family? Share a story of forgiveness that gives you hope.

To do

Repeat a slogan to remind yourself of the possibilities opened up through forgiveness. For example: *We shall overcome. When I forgive, I am free. Change everything: love and forgive.*



To discuss

What kinds of things are best not forgotten?

To do

Create a memory collage. Include pictures or drawings of things you want to remember, being sure to represent difficult situations along with the happy times.



To discuss

What are some examples of wholesale forgiving that seem fake to you? What are some small specific acts you can easily forgive?

To do

Practice forgiving little infractions, such as someone dialing the wrong number or bumping into you in a crowd.



To discuss

How do you feel about making amends to the Earth and other beings for how humans have harmed them?

To do

Go to the nearest body of water, stand on the shore, and apologize. Make amends by contributing to the work of an environmental or wildlife organization.



To discuss

What are some of the different types of anger you have witnessed just today?

To do

Make a list of ways that anger manifests in your life—both from you and those around you. What is causing it? For each example, ask yourself: *How would forgiveness change this?*



To discuss

To do



To discuss

Are any acts unforgivable? If you think so, give examples and explain.

To do

Acknowledge the difficulty of forgiveness. Read accounts by survivors of the Holocaust and the Rwanda genocide, relatives of murder victims, and others about their struggles to forgive horrible crimes.



To discuss

What, if any, other statements would you add to these four?

To do

Use these four simple statements at least once today.



LOVE

“The roots of love sink down and deep and strike out far, and they are arteries that feed our lives, so we must see that they get the water and sun they need so they can nourish us.”

Merle Shain

LOVE

“You can heartfully evoke the Billy Joel mantra: ‘I love you just the way you are.’”

Dean Sluyter

LOVE

“Don’t tell me you will love me forever. Tell me that you will love me Thursday afternoon at four o’clock.”

W.H. Auden

LOVE

“One of the deepest longings in the human heart is the desire to be loved for yourself alone. This longing awakens you completely. When you are touched by love, it reaches down into your deepest fibre.”

John O’Donohue

LOVE

“Sometimes the easiest way to appreciate ourselves is by looking through the eyes of someone who loves us. . . . One of my clients realizes he is lovable when he remembers how his grandfather used to delight in his boyish curiosity and inventiveness.”

Tara Brach

LOVE

“Any love dependent on someone else’s behavior wasn’t love in the first place.”

Paula D’Arcy

LOVE

“Seasoned love is not a monotone of simple liking but an emotional symphony that includes discord and ambivalence.”

Sam Keen

LOVE

“We must love them both—those whose opinions we share, those whose opinions we don’t share. They’ve both labored in the search for Truth and have both helped us in finding it.”

Thomas Aquinas

LOVE

“Love is the only force capable of transforming an enemy into a friend. We never get rid of an enemy by meeting hate with hate; we get rid of an enemy by getting rid of enmity. By its very nature, hate destroys and tears down; by its very nature, love creates and builds up.”

Martin Luther King, Jr.

To discuss

At what time and place recently did someone do something that made you feel loved?

To do

Make a specific time and place commitment to someone you love.



To discuss

What song lyrics convey something you know to be important about loving yourself and others?

To do

Use your favorite lyric as a "mantra" this week, reciting it while you are walking or standing in line. See if repeating a thought helps you remember it when you hit a difficult point in a relationship.



To discuss

What kinds of activities serve as water and sun for your ability to love yourself and others?

To do

Do one simple thing to nurture another person's feelings of being loved. *Hint: Try something that helps you.*



To discuss

What conditions do people often put upon being able to love? (These conditions often come from family backgrounds, religious traditions, or cultural norms.)

To do

Make a personal list of the conditions you sometimes put upon your willingness to love. Which ones can you give up?



To discuss

Through whose eyes do you most often see yourself as lovable?

To do

Look in the mirror. Acknowledge what the people who love you see in you.



To discuss

What qualities of your true self do you need to have recognized by a lover, a family member, or a friend?

To do

Write a letter of gratitude to someone who has affirmed who you really are.



To discuss

Where do you see evidence of enmity in your community and country? Brainstorm specific ways you can reduce the amount of hatred in the world with your support, money, and time.

To do

Find an organization or a cause that you can join that is working to transform enemies into friends.



To discuss

Who has been a teacher of Truth for you? How have you, or could you, express your gratitude and love to them?

To do

Make a list of people you agree with and another of those you disagree with. Contemplate them all with love.



To discuss

What kinds of emotional challenges have you experienced in your family life, partnerships, and friendships?

To do

Endure the next conflict, disagreement, or uncertainty in your love relationship without assuming it is a problem.



LOVE

“Gandhi used to put the matter bluntly: when another person’s welfare means more to you than your own, only then can you say you love. Anything else is just business, give-and-take.”

Ek Nath Easwaran

LOVE

“We cannot love issues, but we can love people, and the love of people reveals to us the way to deal with issues.”

Henri J.M. Nouwen

LOVE

“If you want to know if you really ‘love the other as yourself,’ ask yourself if you have done everything you can to make sure that everyone else in society has what you have—and take for granted: insurance, food, housing, a job, education.”

Joan Chittister

LOVE

“There are so many wonderful gifts I can give those I love, but the one that lingers when all the others are gone, the one that knits the brightest threads into life, is the gift of time—the gift of one’s self.”

Sue Monk Kidd

LOVE

“In taking good care of yourself, you can take good care of your beloved one. Self-love is the foundation for your capacity to love the other person. If you don’t take good care of yourself, if you are not happy, if you are not peaceful, you cannot make the other person happy.”

Thích Nhất Hạnh

LOVE

“If the person you are talking to doesn’t appear to be listening, be patient. It may simply be that he has a small piece of fluff in his ear.”

Winnie the Pooh / A. A. Milne

LOVE

“There is an old South African proverb that says the reason two antelope walk together is so that one can blow the dust from the other’s eyes. This sort of friendship enables joy.”

Mark Nepo

LOVE

“Love allows your beloved the freedom to be unlike you. Attachment asks for conformity to your needs and desires. . . . Love imposes no demands. Attachment expresses an overwhelming demand: ‘Make me feel whole.’”

Deepak Chopra

LOVE
FORGIVENESS
COMPASSION
} conversation cards }



Fetzer Institute

To discuss

What are some of your favorite slogans or rules about love? Joan Chittister shows how to make the "Golden Rule" concrete. Do the same with your favorite.

To do

Duplicate for another person today one thing that you do to make yourself happy.



To discuss

What issues are important to people in your community?

To do

Choose one group of people you are committed to. Talk to them about the issues that are important to them and what they would like to see happen. Know that this is one way of showing your love for them.



To discuss

When have you been the beneficiary of selfless giving?

To do

Throughout the day, put others before yourself. This may be as simple as stepping aside so another can enter or exit before you. It may mean giving up something you want so that someone else can have what they need.



To discuss

What roles do listening and patience play in your close relationships? How might you cultivate patience and learn to listen more deeply?

To do

Practice quieting the chatter in your own mind, limiting distractions, and deeply listening to each person you encounter today.



To discuss

What do you do to make yourself happy and peaceful?

To do

Engage in some self-care. Go for a run or walk. Take a nap. Play ball. Attend a concert or a movie. Read for pleasure. Relax.



To discuss

Do you feel you give enough time to your primary relationships? Why or why not?

To do

Spend an hour today or plan a half-day later this week when you can give your undivided attention to your loved ones.



Instructions

Incorporate more love, forgiveness, and compassion in your life through thought, discussion, and action. Use these cards on your own or with friends, family, students, classmates, or colleagues.

Select a card. Read the quote aloud; then turn the card over for suggestions on what to discuss and how to take action.

Special thanks to Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat of spiritualityandpractice.com and Roselle Kovitz for their contributions to this project.



To discuss

What are some other differences between love and attachment?

To do

On a continuum from love to attachment, assess your own tendencies in your relationships. Contemplate how you can move closer to love.



To discuss

What kindnesses has a friend shown you? When has a friend helped you with a difficulty?

To do

Get together with a friend. Help him/her deal with some need, no matter how small.

