

# The Kindness Curriculum Educators notes

# Compassion

Compassion literally means “to suffer together.” It is the capacity to understand the emotional state of another and have genuine feelings for other people's circumstances and feel motivated to support and assist. It requires a certain level of awareness, concern, caregiving and empathy. Compassion requires action. The benefits of showing compassion are numerous: increased happiness and decreased depression; social connection; increased self-esteem, empathy, and well-being.

Self-compassion is the care and nurturing we offer ourselves when we make mistakes, do not achieve or are disappointed with our actions. It serves an important function for self-kindness and forgiveness reducing feelings of anxiety and depression. Self-compassion is also an essential life skill that supports peoples’ mental health and emotional resilience. The activities sourced and designed provide opportunities for people to look and reflect internally and to understand emotions, and responses to life events. The development of positive self-love will better equip people to have compassion and respect for others and themselves.

“Love and compassion are necessities, not luxuries. Without them, humanity cannot survive” ~ Dalai Lama

Compassion and kindness are super powers and mindsets that can change the world!

Compassion is defined as the emotional response when perceiving suffering and is the ability to understand the emotional state of another person or oneself. Whilst the words compassion, and empathy are often used interchangeably and are fundamental aspects of quality relationships, they differ. Empathy is the ability to put oneself in the other person's place, take the perspective of and feel the emotions of another person.

Compassion has the added element of having a desire to alleviate or reduce the suffering of another and involves an authentic desire to assist and act. Research confirms that a compassionate lifestyle leads to greater psychological well-being. It promotes social connection among adults and children. Social connection is important to adaptive human functioning, as it is related to increased self-esteem, empathy, well-being; and higher interpersonal orientation (Seppala et al., 2013).

Compassion is social in nature - we have compassion because we are social beings. Establishing social connections requires the ability to express care and concern for other people, as well as to identify with them. But compassion is not necessarily an automatic response to another’s dilemma.



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It is a personal response often elicited by experience and occurs when the situation is perceived as serious or unjust. It requires a certain level of awareness, concern and empathy. Self-compassion involves acting the same way towards yourself when you are having a difficult time, fail, or notice something you don't like about yourself. It involves treating oneself with the same kindness, concern and support you'd show to others. When confronting personal mistakes, failures, and shortfalls, self-compassion responds with kindness rather than tough self-judgment.

There are many benefits associated with compassion and self-compassion for children, students and adults in a range of contexts:

- Increased happiness
- Higher levels of well-being
- Supports parent-child relationships
- Increased cooperation and better learning
- Promotes workplace engagement, dedication and loyalty
- Improved health and well-being among volunteers
- Supports a productive environment
- Greater job satisfaction and less stress in workplaces
- Reduces pressure, anxiety, increases resilience to stress and burnout

## References

- Seppala, E., Rossomando, T., & Doty, J. R. (2013). Social connection and compassion: Important predictors of health and well-being. *Social Research*, 80, 411–430.



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