

# The Power of Compassion

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*Challenging times can make for some very trying encounters. It's when the going gets tough that the true value of having compassion for others comes into sharp focus. Compassion is more than a thought, it's action. Let's look at the game-changing value of compassion, and explore the challenges and rewards of mindfully bringing in compassion where it is needed most.*

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We are at once unique and the same. We come from different households, backgrounds, cultures, and communities. Through our families, we receive a unique set of values, blueprints, and expectations.

We are all born innocent and pure. We speak the truth and meet each day positively, in a state of happiness and inquisitiveness, eager for new experiences and knowledge. As we grow and prepare to enter the world, we learn through modeled behaviors how to interact with others. We learn what is expected of us, and how to treat other people. In time, our world expands and we begin to make friends and surround ourselves with people we like and enjoy. Eventually, and inevitably, we encounter people and encounters we find unsettling, challenging, and unnerving.

## ***A wild world***

We soon begin to realize that the world is a big and unpredictable place. In it, there are a lot of people who may not conform to our idea of how the world works, and how people interact. We encounter people with thoughts and behaviors that are unhealthy, judgemental of ourselves and others. We witness, learn about, and may even take on maladaptive behaviors or habits of our own.

By the time we are adults, it is not unusual to encounter people who behave hurtfully, judgementally, or critically or act out in anger. At times, we may find ourselves at odds with people we don't even know ... in parking lots, stores, parks, airports, virtually anywhere we may encounter other people. Unpleasant encounters negatively impact our moods, our day, and our overall behavior in public

spaces. After a while, and we may find ourselves going about our errands ignoring others, treating people coldly or dismissively.

## ***People in pain***

People in pain spill onto others. But when people are in low self-esteem or in pain, they can become negative in their thoughts, moods, demeanors, and actions. Through their interactions with others, their pain spreads, spilling over onto others. When we react in kind to unkindness, the negativity spreads. The cycle of negativity gains momentum and can become quite hurtful, and even violent. There is a better way forward. This is where compassion comes in.

## ***Where compassion comes in***

It is not difficult to be kind and considerate to people who treat us well. But showing compassion for people who are acting and reacting in low self-esteem, rather than returning in kind their negativity and judgment is a different story. A compassionate response is a true game-changer. Compassion benefits both the person showing compassion and the recipient of a more compassionate response.

## ***Compassion in action***

Compassion is more than a thought. Compassion is action, a response to another person. Here's an example: Lucas, who has been standing in line for half an hour, misinterprets a gesture of the grocery store employee in charge of keeping a long line-up of shoppers outside the store from exceeding the store's capacity. He is yelled at as he steps forward and rudely ordered to get back in line wait. Though he steps back into line,

the employee continues to berate him for not following rules.

Here, Lucas has a choice. He could get into a yelling match, try to defend himself by explaining that he misinterpreted this person's gesture, or he could ignore the whole thing. Instead, he makes a more compassionate gesture, apologizes for his misstep, and acknowledges how tough it must be for this person to do crowd control when it's not their usual job.

### **The power of a compassionate response**

Here, instead of matching the negative energy coming his way, he acted in compassion. In this small but thoughtful act of compassion, he not only neutralized what could have become a very unpleasant encounter with unpleasant results, but he also acknowledged the challenging circumstances of another human being. When we counteract negative thoughts and actions of others with positive thoughts, boundaries, and actions, the power of a positive, compassionate response spreads.

### **Healthy boundaries, healing encounters**

When we interact with people stuck in negative patterns, we don't need to suffer and accept abuse. We can respond by counteracting negativity, then set healthy boundaries and step away. We don't need to

endure mean, hurtful, critical, insulting, judgemental, or abusive encounters.

Have compassion for yourself when your encounter hurtful people. You are reminding people who are in pain, darkness, low self-esteem, and ignorance that they can be better, higher versions of themselves.

### **A game-changer**

Compassion for ourselves, others, society, our world is a game-changer. Bringing compassion to what you can control — your own thoughts, actions, and reactions — ripples outward and makes the world a better place.

### **Acting in compassion**

**Stop** yourself from matching the negative energy of others

**Bring** in empathy for a person who is acting in negativity

**Counteract** negativity with a more positive response

**Set** healthy boundaries that keep you safe and secure



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### *About the author*

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