



Everyday Compassion:

Tools for Resilience, Connection, and Growth

Dr. Sophia Lin Ott, Psy.D., BCC, RYT-500

What is Compassion?

- **Compassion** literally means “to suffer together.”
- It is a "concern for the well-being of others"
- It is our capacity to be open to the reality of suffering AND to aspire to its healing.

Compassion is similar to, but NOT:

- Empathy: a vicarious experience of another person’s emotion.
- Altruism: a principle of Devotion to the welfare of others.
- Benevolence: a desire to do good or promote the happiness of others through kindness and generosity.

Benefits of Compassion

- Increases our **resilience** and is **a protective factor**.
 - whereas Empathy can lead to burnout or Compassion Fatigue, even Vicarious Traumatization.
- Increases our **connection**.
- Increases our **growth**.

What is Everyday Compassion?

- **Embodied Compassion**
- **Embody**: to give a body to; to make concrete and perceptible.
- **Embodiment**: A tangible or visible form of an idea, quality, or feeling.

- Our Body's Nervous System
 - ANS = SNS + Vagus Nerve + PNS
 - SNS: Fight-Flight-Freeze
 - PNS: Friend & Tend or Digest & Rest
 - Vagus Nerve: the Switch

Applications of Compassion

- Mindfulness: a moment-by-moment awareness of our thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations, and surrounding environment, through a gentle, nurturing lens.
- Meditation: specific practices that promote mindfulness; typically seated.
- Neuroplasticity: “neurons that fire together wire together”
- Self-Compassion: self-kindness vs self-judgment
- Compassion at Work:
 - *Noticing*: Pay attention to clues that might suggest someone is suffering.
 - *Interpretation*: Consider people's suffering to be real and worthy.
 - *Feeling*: Mindfully empathize with others.
 - *Acting*: Create psychological safety to enhance trust and fuel generosity.
- Compassion with Students:
 - Center yourself first.
 - Accept your limitations with embodied compassion.
 - Invite student to also embody compassion.
 - Use somatic tools to stay grounded or restart a meeting that goes off track.
 - TRAUMA caveats/reminders

Group Work Questions: Compassion for Work

Self-Reflection

When am I less compassionate? When am I more?

What is the compassion culture of my immediate team? My department?

What beliefs and feelings do I have about my work unit?

How can I cultivate more compassion ...

in myself?

in my team?

in my work habits?

my communication?

Discussion

Group Work Questions: Compassion with Students

Self-Reflection

What beliefs and feelings do I have about my work with students?

What beliefs and feelings do I have toward individual students?

How can I cultivate more compassion ...

in myself?

in my student?

in their work and communication habits?

How do I prepare for my meetings?

What am I doing well?

What do I need to compassionately examine so I can help the student grow?

Discussion

Everyday Compassion Resources

Dr. Sophia's Online Course: Overcome Your Anxiety and Stress

Learn more about how to manage your nervous system and increase control of your emotions.

Regular Price \$199

*****Special SJSU Conference Pricing*****

\$9.95 through Monday 12/7/2020

Coupon Code: **SJSUAADec2020**

<https://drsophialinott.thinkific.com>

Stanford Medicine, Center for Compassion and Altruism Research and Education

<http://ccare.stanford.edu>

Self Compassion w Dr. Kristen Neff

<https://self-compassion.org>

The Oxford Handbook of Compassion Science

<http://ccare.stanford.edu/article/the-oxford-handbook-of-compassion-science/>

How to Awaken Compassion at Work

https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/how_to_awaken_compassion_at_work

How to cultivate compassion at work

[Awakening Compassion at Work: The Quiet Power that Elevates People and Organizations](#) (Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2017, 272 pages)

The book describes four aspects of compassion that employers need to master if they want to be appropriately responsive.

Research on Buddhist Conceptions of Compassion: An Annotated Bibliography: How do Buddhist and Western notions of compassion differ?

https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/buddhist_conceptions_of_compassion_an_annotated_bibliography

What is Compassion and How Can We Measure it? A Review of Definitions and Measures

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/303600556_What_is_Compassion_and_How_Can_We_Measure_it_A_Review_of_Definitions_and_Measures

Self-Compassion Breaks

https://ggia.berkeley.edu/practice/self_compassion_break

Loving Kindness Meditation

https://ggia.berkeley.edu/practice/compassion_meditation

<https://self-compassion.org/guided-self-compassion-meditations-mp3-2/>

When Empathy Hurts, Compassion Can Heal

A new neuroscientific study shows that compassion training can help us cope with other people's distress.

BY [ADAM HOFFMAN](#) | AUGUST 22, 2013

Empathy can be painful. Or so suggests a [growing body](#) of neuroscientific research. When we witness suffering and distress in others, our [natural tendency](#) to empathize can bring us vicarious pain. Is there a better way of approaching distress in other people? A recent [study](#), published in the journal *Cerebral Cortex*, suggests that we can better cope with others' negative emotions by

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Sophia Lin Ott, Psy.D.

www.drsofialinott.com

strengthening our own compassion skills, which the researchers define as “feeling concern for another’s suffering and desiring to enhance that individual’s welfare.”

“Empathy is really important for understanding others’ emotions very deeply, but there is a downside of empathy when it comes to the suffering of others,” says Olga Klimecki, a researcher at the Max Planck Institute for Human Cognitive and Brain Sciences in Germany and the lead author of the study. “When we share the suffering of others too much, our negative emotions increase. It carries the danger of an emotional burnout.”

“Compassion is a good antidote,” says Klimecki. “It allows us to connect to others’ suffering, without being too distressed.”

The main takeaway is that we can shape our own emotional reactions, and can alter the way we feel and respond to certain situations. In other words, says Klimecki, “Our emotions are not set in stone.”

What Is Mindfulness?

Mindfulness means maintaining a moment-by-moment awareness of our thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations, and surrounding environment, through a gentle, nurturing lens.

Mindfulness also involves acceptance, meaning that we pay attention to our thoughts and feelings without judging them—without believing, for instance, that there’s a “right” or “wrong” way to think or feel in a given moment. When we practice mindfulness, our thoughts tune into what we’re sensing in the present moment rather than rehashing the past or imagining the future.

Though it has its roots in Buddhist meditation, a secular practice of mindfulness has entered the American mainstream in recent years, in part through the work of Jon Kabat-Zinn and his Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program, which he launched at the University of Massachusetts Medical School in 1979. Since that time, thousands of studies have documented the physical and mental health benefits of mindfulness in general and MBSR in particular, inspiring countless programs to adapt the MBSR model for schools, prisons, hospitals, veterans centers, and beyond.

Meditation Makes Us Act with Compassion

A new study suggests mindfulness meditation can help us overcome the "bystander effect."

BY **EMILIANA R. SIMON-THOMAS** | APRIL 11, 2013

according to a new study published in [Psychological Science](#), this study shows is that meditation, whether or not it explicitly focuses on compassion, significantly increases compassionate behavior.

A great deal of research to date has documented the personal benefits of meditation: [stress relief](#), [better physical health](#), [enhanced memory and attention skills](#), even [stronger brains](#). But this study offers some of the most compelling evidence to date of the *interpersonal* benefits of mindfulness—in this case, its ability to heighten compassionate responses to other people.

Meditation teaches us *not* to get hijacked by worry, or to try to impose tyrannical control over our thoughts and feelings. Meditation enables us to coast through these impulses when confronted with another person’s pain, which frees up biological resources so that caregiving instincts can surface to guide behavior. This may be a reason that meditation makes people more compassionate.

Condon, the study’s lead author, says “The most provocative implication is that meditation may help us become more compassionate in any context where compassion is discouraged,” he says, “such as the workplace, toward a member of a rival group, or toward anyone who is disliked.”

The Compassionate Species

We’ve done studies where we measure activity in the vagus nerve, which extends from our brainstems to our abdomens. This nerve is the physiological nexus with [compassion](#), and when it’s active most of us feel warm expansion, the feeling we get when we are moved emotionally. The more your vagus nerve fires, the more compassion you feel.

https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/the_compassionate_species

How to Awaken Compassion at Work

A new book explains why showing compassion in the workplace can help employees and businesses to thrive.

BY [JILL SUTTIE](#) | MARCH 17, 2017

Why we need compassion at work

According to surveys of workers, suffering is rampant in work settings. Employees [often feel disengaged](#), and [don’t believe](#) their supervisors appreciate their talents and skills, [understand the difficulties](#) of their work, or [care](#) about their personal struggles.

Responding compassionately to workers not only improves their performance and loyalty, but also creates an atmosphere that is safe for learning, collaboration, and innovation—which all impact the bottom line. In [a study](#) by Amy Edmondson recounted in the book, hospitals with high levels of “psychological safety” were more willing to admit to error and collaborate to find solutions. Compassion plays a role in psychological safety, because it can enhance trust and fuel generosity, which in turn can have [a cascade effect](#) in organizations.