



Compassionate Living

Set an Intention

Each morning, set an intention to be motivated by compassion this day. Say to yourself, “May I notice suffering around me, and may I be helpful with empathy.” And say, “I am here for you.”

Support Local Causes

Helping out locally with your time and financial support in your own community can create a real feeling of immediacy between action and outcome. Even knowing that there are many worthy causes all around the world and you may very well find ways to help those who are suffering further afield, and it may miss the immediacy of the felt sense of compassion.

Start Small

There are so many opportunities to be compassionate, and it is perfectly reasonable to start small. Do small acts of compassion that help people to suffer a little less, such as listening a little longer to someone who is upset, or running an errand for someone who is quickly running out of time in their day. Something as simple as saying “Hello” to everyone who comes within five feet, or looking directly into the eyes of everyone within ten feet of you.

Look for Opportunities

One component of compassion is encouragement. As you move about your life, keep your head up and eyes open looking for opportunities to practice a gift of kindness each day, compassion in action. Sometimes we can be on autopilot and walk right by these opportunities. So see if you can open up yourself and create awareness.

Be Practical

Another component of compassion is action. Be practical with your help, support, or involvement in alleviating, witnessing, or preventing suffering. Seeing suffering and then doing something practical to help can make a real difference to yourself and others.

Focus Your Efforts

Considering how to focus your efforts can be invaluable. Perhaps something has happened in your own life, and you find a way to help others who are going through the same thing. Perhaps, your community is struggling with particular issues like the opiate epidemic. Focusing your efforts will help maintain your energy and motivation. Think small, aim low, go slow.

Play to Your Strengths

Acting with compassion skillfully is vital and most likely to be helpful. So, how is your skillfulness at being empathetic? And how might you be able to use it? Are you a therapist, an artist, a community organizer, a property manager? No matter what you do, you will have certain skills that can also be brought to compassionate action as well as the skillfulness of empathy.

Inspire Others

Compassion is infectious, and can spread through a family or friendship group, a neighborhood or community. Setting a compassionate example can often inspire others, and this is certainly something where the more the merrier! Be an advocate and champion of empathetic compassion.

Do Regular Compassion Audits

Check in with yourself at the end of the day and ask, “How well have I lived with compassion today?” What were some moments where I was helpful? Were there other moments where I could have been helpful? What about moments where I might have hurt or harmed another. We are all fallible human beings, and so sometimes we can accidentally, carelessly, or even sometimes purposefully cause suffering. Being aware of this. Understanding it and working to do things differently or better tomorrow can lead to real growth.

Yourself

Finally, yourself. The famous Buddhist psychologist Jack Kornfield once said, “If your compassion does not include yourself, then it is incomplete.” The more you act for others in a compassionate way, the more you mindfully address your own harsh, critical self-thinking. Feel the returning joyful feeling of compassion.