



CONCERN:EAP

Healthy & Resilient You



Com(assion)

Getting excited about caring for others

What do you get when you take empathy, the ability to feel others' pain, and combine it with altruism, acting for the benefit of others? The answer is compassion: the essential link in the gap between feeling and doing.

Compassion is an important piece of the mindfulness puzzle, and behavioral scientists have recently taken a deeper look into its nature and power. Among other things, they discovered that:



Communities with higher levels of compassion grow and flourish more than their less compassionate counterparts.



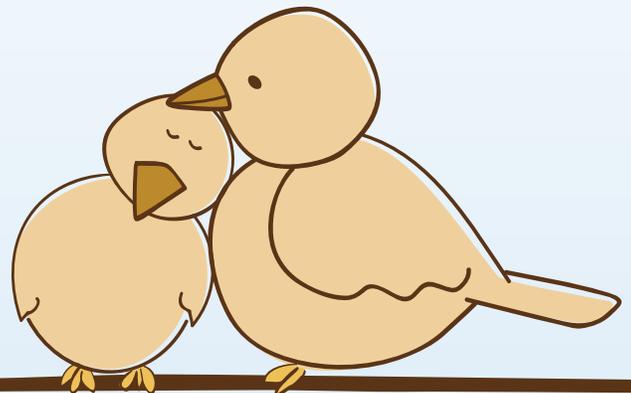
Compassion (and kindness) can make us more attractive to potential romantic partners.



Even though compassion is an inherent trait—one that we're born with—it's not necessarily fixed, meaning that it can be nurtured and developed with the right tools and focus.

A Compelling Argument for Compassion

"Well," you might say, *"It can take years to see a community change, and I already have a romantic partner, so why should I work on my compassion? What else is it good for?"* It turns out it's good for a lot. Studies show that by working to increase our compassion, we're not only working to improve the fate and state of the world, we're also building resilience and mental and physical health for ourselves.



Compassion can benefit

Emotional healthy by

- » Countering depression
- » Increasing overall happiness
- » Increasing satisfaction and life contentment
- » Increasing emotional intelligence (EQ)
- » Building stronger social connections

Physical health by

- » Reducing inflammation
- » Potentially improving longevity
- » Boosting immune response
- » Reducing migraines and chronic pain

The world by

- » Inspiring leaders to fight for progress and change
- » Setting off a chain reaction of good deeds and generous actions
- » Motivating others in a more sustainable, effective way than through stress or fear



How to Feel the Burn of Compassion

So, how can we start to build compassion and take advantage of its many benefits? A great place to start is with a simple **loving-kindness meditation**, which can be an effective tool for establishing a more compassionate frame of mind. Here are some additional thoughts:

Set a positive tone for the day every morning

Right after you wake up, take a moment to summon and soak in your gratitude for being alive. Say something like, “I will do my best to be kind and supportive of others, especially those who seem to be sad or suffering.”

Find common ground

Recognizing that others have experiences and feelings like our own is essential for building compassion. Try this **conversational practice** to help find common ground with others in your life.

Feel their pain, imagine their relief

Once you can recognize the suffering of others, next try to experience it in your mind. How does their pain feel? How good would it feel for that suffering to cease? Think of this exercise as working your compassion muscles.

Practice intentional acts of kindness

Better yet, make them random. Compliment someone on a job well done, thank a colleague for sharing a great idea in a meeting or offer to bring your cubicle neighbor a beverage back from the break room when you go to fetch your own.

Practice forgiveness

Compassion doesn't play favorites. By **forgiving those who have mistreated us**, we can open the door to the benefits of compassion. As a bonus, the person who hurt us might receive our kindness, and pay it forward, acting with greater empathy toward others in the future.

End the day in reflection

Before falling asleep, or while brushing your teeth, take a moment to review your day. Did you meet your intention to be more compassionate with the people in your life? On social media? On the news? Where were your successes? Where could you have improved? How could you have applied compassion techniques to those interactions? And how will you tomorrow?

Try adding one or two of these practices to your day. You can do them in a series, or individually—anytime, anywhere. It gets easier the more you work at it, and every little bit brings you closer to being a healthier, more resilient, and more compassionate you.

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