

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO PRACTICE KINDNESS AND COMPASSION?

Creating a way of life through kindness and compassion



kindness &
compassion
podcast

kindnessandcompassion.com

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WELCOME FRIEND

As much as anything, the practices of kindness and compassion create a way of life. It is a way to be intentional about how you see and treat yourself and others. Some core elements of the practices of kindness and compassion are **Acts of Service, Listening, Gratitude, Mindfulness, Self-Compassion, Forgiveness, and Slowing Down.**

Gordon Brewer

KINDNESS AND COMPASSION

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WHAT IS KINDNESS?

Kindness is a verb... it is the intentional actions we take in how we interact with others and ourselves. It involves being warm, friendly, generous, and considerate of others. There are also elements of altruism connected to kindness. Kindness does not necessarily require compassion, but to act out of kindness is a choice we have. Kindness may or may not come with compassion.



WHAT IS COMPASSION?



Compassion is an emotion. In many ways, compassion is something we feel. At the root of the word and its meaning is “to suffer together”. Compassion comes out of a deep sympathy and understanding of the suffering of other people’s difficulties **ALONG WITH** a desire to help.

Although somewhat similar to empathy, an understanding of how another person feels, compassion nearly always includes the desire to help in their plight. It can be a motivator for kindness.

Acts of Service

At the core of kindness is being intentional about how we treat others. Kindness begins with treating people with dignity and respect. It can also be simply doing something nice and considerate of others and treating others as you would want to be treated (AKA, the “golden rule”). The service or act of kindness can even be small; holding a door for someone, a smile, picking up something dropped or volunteering at a homeless shelter.. The possibilities are endless when it comes to acts of service. Here’s a short list of ideas:

- Volunteering to fix meals at a homeless shelter
- Keeping a bag of food and other essentials to give to the next homeless person you encounter
- Pay for the food of the person behind you in line
- Pick up trash in your neighborhood
- Take a meal to someone that is sick
- Mow the lawn of someone struggling
- Do extra chores at home when they least expect it
- Surprise someone with flowers
- Offer to babysit for some new parents who need a night out
- Bring trash cans in or set them out for a neighbor
- Buy coffee or snacks for office mates
- Give someone an unexpected gift card
- Leave your quarter in the grocery cart at Aldis
- Send a card to a friend you haven’t seen in a while

LISTENING

Kindness and compassion come from a place of **understanding others**. And in order to understand someone we have to listen to them. One of the kindest things we can do is simply listen to someone who is struggling in some way. It is what leads to compassion.



EQUIPPED TO LISTEN

There is an old Irish proverb: “God gave us two ears and one mouth for a reason. We should listen twice as much as we speak”

When we truly **try to understand a person’s back story**, we can then be better equipped to find compassion. When we feel understood by others it causes us to feel close and connected to them. It is also what creates intimacy in the emotional sense.



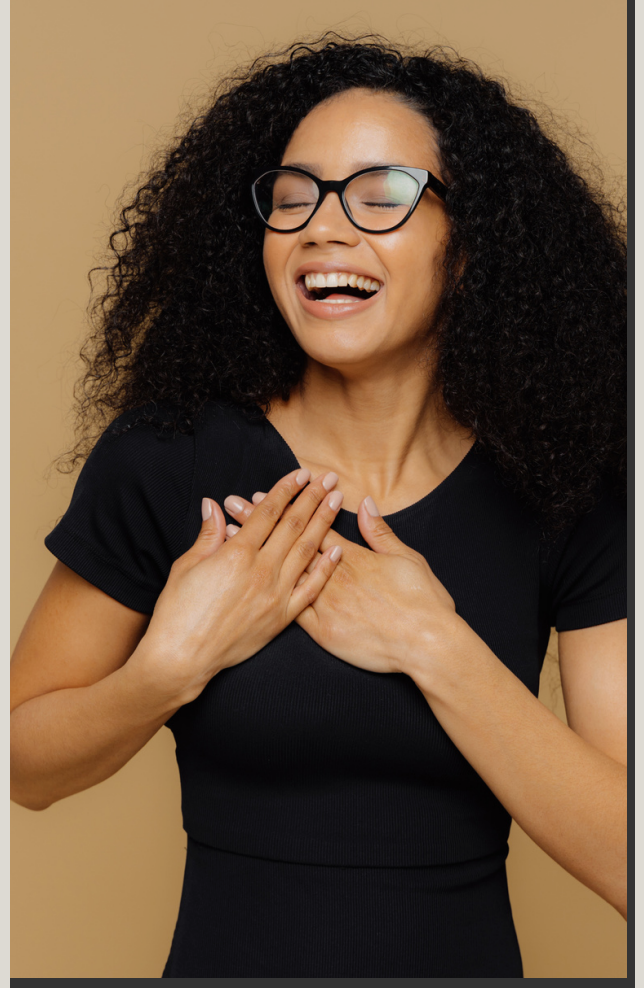
ACTIVE LISTENING

One of the best ways to engage in listening is to practice “active listening”. Here are some tips on becoming a better active listener:

- **Avoid judgment-** do your best to understand the other person’s perspective. Just hear them out even if you see things differently. Avoid being critical even if you disagree.
- **Be curious** - ask questions to get more details to understand the other person’s world. Avoid jumping to conclusions about their meaning
- **Lean in** - they say 80% of communication is body language. Be aware of what you are communicating through your body language
- **Paraphrase-** repeat back what you heard to clarify what the person is saying to you.
- **Avoid going on the defensive** - even if you disagree, try not to express that in the moment. If you feel criticized, try not to go on the defensive. Instead, get curious about what is going on for them.
- **Try not to fix** - even if you feel as if someone is asking for advice, giving advice can sometimes feel critical. Instead, just hear and acknowledge.

GRATITUDE

One of the core practices of kindness and compassion is the practice of gratitude. Gratitude is something we understand but is sometimes hard to define. One definition is in being mindful of what we have rather than don't have. It is also recognizing the things we appreciate about others.



GRATITUDE IN ACTION

Robert Emmons and Michael McCullough, two researchers into the science of gratitude, define gratitude as a two-step process: 1) “recognizing that one has obtained a positive outcome” and 2) “recognizing that there is an external source for this positive outcome.”

The psychological effects of practicing gratitude seem to have significant benefits. Practicing gratitude reinforces positive emotions. And people that practice gratitude do seem to be happier, more content, and experience less anxiety in their lives. Research supports that when people practice gratitude, they have a much greater sense of well-being.





IDEAS FOR PRACTICING GRATITUDE

- Write gratitude letters to people randomly.
- Send thank you notes or put a note on a co-worker's desk.
- Start a gratitude journal.
- Start a gratitude jar; write something you are thankful for on a slip of paper and put it in a jar. Read them aloud when you are feeling down, angry or anxious.
- Create a gratitude collage by cutting pictures from magazines that remind you of things you are grateful for.
- Make a list of the things and people you have in your life that are important to you and that you appreciate.
- Make a list of the small “wins” you have had for the week. That is anything that was something positive you accomplished or made you feel good.
- Be aware of times when you complain. People that focus on the positive aspects of their life are usually much happier.
- Learn to “let go” of the hassles and little things that irritate you throughout the day.
- Set a goal to be more intentional about thanking people. In particular, people who are working in service jobs (grocery stores, restaurants, car washes, etc.). Make it a personal policy to tip 20% or more. Thank working people specifically on holidays.
- Go out of your way to thank people that give you the gift of their time.

MINDFULNESS

Mindfulness takes practice. And as a person learns the skills of mindfulness, it is really one of the best ways to practice kindness and compassion for yourself. Being mindful is simply being aware of the things we think about plus, HOW you are thinking about those things. It gives us control of our thoughts, feelings, and actions.

All of us are creatures of habit. For the most part we all think and behave in very predictable ways. For example, most of us get ready for our day in the morning in pretty much the same way. There is an order to it. And... it is not something we really think about. We are the same way with our thinking. We process and think about things without being aware of how we do that.



MINDFULNESS IS AWARENESS

When we become mindful, we become aware of our thoughts. We also become more in touch with what we are feeling and how we are behaving. It's like we become observers of ourselves.

In fact, mindfulness is the key to people being able to manage their emotions well; AKA “emotional intelligence”. Emotional intelligence is most often defined as the ability to be aware of and handle one’s emotions. People with high emotional intelligence can not only recognize and handle their own emotions well, they are also able to handle the emotions they encounter in others. The term “emotional intelligence” gained popularity in 1995 with the book written by Daniel Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ.*



MINDFULNESS TAKES PRACTICE

The other key to mindfulness is learning to live in the **present moment** as opposed to being preoccupied with the past or the future. It is learning to be grounded in what is happening now rather than worrying about what might happen or having regrets about what has happened in the past.

But mindfulness takes practice. And one of the best ways to learn this skill is through meditation. Meditation and mindfulness is a processes of slowing down and simply becoming aware of what is happening within your body and the space around you. It causes us to be aware of things we take for granted or fail to notice. It also gives us more control over ourselves.

Ultimately as we learn to be more mindful and aware, it helps us to show more kindness and compassion to ourselves and others. It **empowers us and helps** us feel more in control emotionally and spiritually.

HERE ARE SOME WAYS TO BEGIN PRACTICING MINDFULNESS:

- **Take a moment** to look around the room you are in now and notice some detail you have not paid attention to in a while.
- Sit in a comfortable position and gently close your eyes. Take in several deeper than normal breaths. Notice the sensation of the air as you breathe in and out.
- **Take a walk outside** and intentionally notice sights, sounds, and smells. Notice the sensation of the air and your surroundings.
- **Read a book...** As simple as this sounds, reading is a mindfulness practice in that you are focused on the words of the page as it pulls you into what is written. It is a present moment activity.
- When you are feeling anxious or out of sorts, **notice where you feel that in your body**. Is it your head or chest? Focus in on that sensation while taking deep breaths. Notice how it changes the feeling.
- **Check out these free mindfulness app recommendations** form Mindful.org:
<https://www.mindful.org/free-mindfulness-apps-worthy-of-your-attention/>
- **Thought stopping and shifting** - Be aware of your negative thoughts. Say aloud to yourself “Stop!”. Then purposely try thinking of something positive or enjoyable. When your mind goes back to the negative thoughts, gently move your mind back to the positive thoughts.

SELF- COMPASSION

Being human can be hard. As we move through life there are certainly a lot of ups and downs. Through all of it, most of us try to do the best we can at navigating all the stuff. And since we are human, we do make mistakes. News flash... NONE OF US ARE PERFECT!



ACCEPT MISTAKES AS NORMAL AND NATURAL

We all will make mistakes. It's a given... Part of the problem is that we all have stories we tell ourselves about yourself.





SELF COMPASSION

- **Speak to yourself kindly:** Treat yourself with the same kindness and compassion that you would show to a friend. Use positive and encouraging language when you talk to yourself.
- **Practice mindfulness:** Being present and aware of your thoughts and feelings helps you be more compassionate towards yourself.
- **Be kind to yourself:** Treat yourself with kindness, even when you make mistakes. Remember that everyone makes mistakes, and be gentle with yourself.
- **Forgive yourself:** Learn to forgive yourself for past mistakes and let go of any self-criticism or negative thoughts.
- **Take care of yourself:** Make sure you are getting enough sleep, eating well, and getting regular exercise. Taking care of your physical and mental health is also important.
- **Practice self-compassionate self-talk:** Instead of criticizing or judging yourself, try to speak to yourself with understanding and kindness. Acknowledge your feelings and offer yourself support and encouragement.
- **Reach out for support:** If you are struggling with self-compassion, it can be helpful to talk to a therapist or counselor. They can help you develop self-compassion skills and provide support.

It is important to note that self-compassion is **not the same as self-pity or self-indulgence**, it is the ability to acknowledge and accept our own flaws and imperfections with kindness and understanding, rather than judgment. It is a skill that can be developed over time with practice and self-awareness.

MORE MINDFULNESS RESOURCES

- From Greater Good Science Center:
 - [White Paper on The Science of Gratitude](#)
- From Mindful.org:
 - [How to Be More Compassionate: A Mindful Guide to Compassion](#)
- National Center for Biotechnical Information:
 - <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3010965/>
- Happify.com
 - <https://www.happify.com/hd/the-science-behind-gratitude/>
- Positive Psychology - tons of resources and self-help guides
 - <https://positivepsychology.com/blog/>
- Mindful.org - resources for mindfulness and meditation practices
 - <https://www.mindful.org/>
- Stanford University Center for Compassion and Altruism Research
 - <http://ccare.stanford.edu/>



KEEP PRACTICING KINDNESS AND COMPASSION

FIND MORE SUPPORT

- PsychCraft Network
- Kindness and Compassion
- The Practice of Therapy

