



DEB  PALMER GEORGE

WHOLE LIFE THRIVING

YOUR THRIVING NATURE

COMPASSION

BONUS MATERIAL • PRACTICES & TOOLS

“Compassion, which literally means “to suffer with” means to me that we honor the difficulties that arise within ourselves and others. In honoring our own and others’ experiences we do not deny or diminish feelings, challenges, or adversity being experienced. Nor do we identify ourselves or others by what has happened in our lives. Compassion, directed inward or outward says, “My space is filled with love enough to support you having your experience.”

- from *Your Thriving Nature, Connect with Your Innate Wisdom and Wholeness*

Overview

The philosopher Simone Weil is quoted as saying *“Attention is the rarest and purest form of generosity.”*

Compassion is a form of attention, an attention that is paid to our own and other’s experience and it flows from the generosity that Weil spoke of. Generosity of spirit is being able to be present to an experience without trying to change it, deny it, or compete with it.

Compassion needs connection so that we stay in the present with our own and others’ experiences, it is a precursor of curiosity because it flows from innate respect for the experience at hand and it is a gateway to choice because it is directed toward healing and relief of suffering.

Compassion Practices

Make a regular practice of self-compassion

Self-compassion supports compassion with others. Dr. Kristin Neff is an accomplished researcher and author on the subject of self-compassion. The links below take you to the practices and tips section of her website. Here's an approach for making use of a resource like this:

Begin by scheduling a 30-minute appointment on your calendar to read the ["Tips for Self-Compassion" overview](#)

After reading the introduction, go to the page of ["Self-Compassion Guided Meditations and Exercises"](#)

Review the list of guided meditations and exercises. Choose one that resonates with you, do that by noticing what feels interesting and accessible.

Decide how long you will experiment with doing the practice, for example, *I'll try this out once a day for 2 weeks* or 3 times a week for a month. Once you've decided, put an appointment or task reminder in your calendar. If you use an electronic calendar, put a link to the practice instructions in the appointment or task so it's easy to launch. If you use a paper calendar, print the activity and put it in your calendar or journal.

At the end of each week take a few minutes to reflect on your practice.

What was your experience? What do you appreciate about trying out the self-compassion practices? What did you learn about yourself and the practice? How will you integrate and carry forward self-compassion practices?

Try the "Just Like Me" practice

Sometimes a barrier to compassion can be judgment of another person's behavior, attitude or choices, this exercise can help to cultivate connection and compassion for another beyond behavior.

This exercise is derived from Buddhist teachings and practices, in particular the practice of tonglen. It has written about in great depth by many renowned teachers, including Pema Chodron and Ram Dass.

“Just Like Me” Exercise

Settle in to a comfortable position. Connect with your breath. Let your breath be soft and slow. Let your eyelids settle or close if that is comfortable.

Bring to mind the person(s) or behavior that is challenging for you.

Take a moment of gratitude that you are doing this practice, for your yearning to connect other’s humanity beyond their behavior.

Inhale your hands together at your heart, exhale and bring the 1st 2 fingers of your left hand to the pulse in your neck, rest your right hand palm up on your knee.

Pause to feel the sensation in your neck, the pulse of your own heart beating. When you are ready, gently recognize that the heartbeat of the other person or persons is ignited by the same source as yours.

Stay with your fingers on your heartbeat, breathing softly and slowly, until you feel the rhythm of your heartbeat and understand that others do as well.

Gently recite aloud or silently to yourself: breathing softly and slowly:

“Just like me, this person is trying to meet their needs”

“Just like me, this person is trying to avoid suffering in their life”

“Just like me, this person has known sadness, loneliness and despair”

“Just like me, this person seeks safety and belonging”

“Just like me, this person is learning about life”

“Just like me, this person yearns for healing, even if it is not in their awareness”

“May they know peace and healing, sooner than later”

“May peace and healing within me be a benefit for this person and for all beings everywhere”

Pause after reciting and release your hand, let both hands rest in your lap.

Notice the sensations within your body, mind and spirit. Take a breath in gratitude for doing this practice.

Intentions

Find a comfortable, quiet space to consider the following questions.

What does compassion for self and others mean to me?

How has compassion already served me, and how can I build on what has served me going forward?

Why am I ready to practice compassion differently or more deeply? What values or beliefs will this practice help me to embody?

What immediate favorable actions will I take to cultivate compassion in my life?

How will I support myself in taking these actions? Who or what might support me?

“If you want others to be happy, practice compassion. If you want to be happy, practice compassion.”

—Dalai Lama