

Compassion

Character... It starts with me!

MONTHLY EDUCATOR BULLETIN

Vs. Indifference

I WILL:

- stop to help
- listen when others want to talk
- give of my resources to help those in need
- look for lasting solutions
- comfort others without regard to race, gender, faith, age, or nationality

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Helping those in need

Compassion is fairly easy to understand once you learn it is an active state - the "make a difference" state. It's about being sensitive to the hurts of others and seeking ways to heal those hurts.

Self-compassion is doing the same thing for ourselves when we recognize our own failings and hurts. In understanding and acknowledging our own failures and pain, we can be more sensitive to what others' are feeling. By healing ourselves first, we can be stronger and more helpful for others.

This month turn the noun Compassion into an action verb.



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No Matter How You Say It

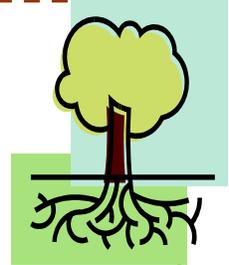
Compasión vs.
Indiferencia

Invertir lo que sea necesario
para aliviar el dolor
de otros



↻ ↻ Go to the Root ↻ ↻

Compassion is a combination of the Latin com, meaning “with” and the word passio meaning “to bear or suffer”. Can you see how compassion means to suffer with those who are hurting?



Sign Language

Check out the following website for the American Sign Language interpretation of the word Wise and Foolish

Compassion <https://www.handspeak.com/word/search/index.php?id=6492>
Indifferent <https://www.handspeak.com/word/search/index.php?id=7064>

Can you see how compassion starts in the heart and Indifference doesn't care?

From Miriam Webster (www.merriam-webster.com)

Synonyms

bigheartedness, charity, commiseration, heart, feeling, good- heartedness, humanity, kindheartedness, kindness, kindness, largeheartedness, mercy, pity, ruth, softheartedness, sympathy, warmheartedness

Near Antonyms

callousness, coldness, disinterest, indifference, unconcern, cruelty, harshness

“ People will accept your idea much more readily if you tell them Benjamin Franklin said it first.” -David H. Comins

Character Quotables

Compassion is the keen awareness of the interdependence of all things.

~Thomas Merton

Compassion is sometimes the fatal capacity for feeling what it is like to live inside somebody else's skin. It is the knowledge that there can never really be any peace and joy for me until there is peace and joy finally for you too.”

~Frederick Buechner

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

~Dalai Lama

The whole idea of compassion is based on a keen awareness of the interdependence of all these living beings, which are all part of one another, and all involved in one another.

~Thomas Merton

Compassion is not weakness, and concern for the unfortunate is not socialism.

~Hubert H. Humphrey

May we not succumb to thoughts of violence and revenge today, but rather to thoughts of mercy and compassion. We are to love our enemies that they might be returned to their right minds.

~Marianne Williamson

The individual is capable of both great compassion and great indifference. He has it within his means to nourish the former and outgrow the latter.

~Norman Cousins

Indifference and neglect often do much more damage than outright dislike.

~J. K. Rowling

The super power that I would choose would be compassion. Because that's what I think it takes to make it through life - an understanding, a give and take. It saves an awful lot of resentment.

~Craig T. Nelson

Love cannot endure indifference. It needs to be wanted. Like a lamp, it needs to be fed out of the oil of another's heart, or its flame burns low.

~Henry Ward Beecher

Give children at least as many chances to show compassion as they have to be competitive.

~Erica Layman

Curriculum Connection



Science

Hearing vs. Listening

Hearing is the passive biological function of understanding sound. Listening is the active function of processing the information and acting on it, learning from it or storing it for later use.



In order to listen effectively, you need to filter out the background noise that is not pertinent. Mostly, we do this filtering without thinking. When someone gets a hearing aid or has tubes put in plugged ears they have to relearn the process of filtering sounds.

Compassion requires that we actively listen and hear with our hearts.

Amanda Denkler, Hero of Compassion



Amanda Denkler founded the Kids of Compassion ministry in November of 2006 through a challenge by her pastor, Rev. Dr. Kirk McCormick. He asked her to take \$100 and use it to share the love of Christ with people. The pastor instructed her to report back to the church the following Sunday to give an accounting of the money she spent and how it showed God's love to others. This was the opportunity and encouragement Amanda needed to fund an idea she had for several months. She had often seen homeless people asking for help and felt

what was given was not an instantaneous help to them. Her idea was to keep boxes in our car filled with things that would help the people the moment they asked.

That week Amanda determined what would be beneficial to people and set out to purchase items for the boxes. She collected additional money and product donations and brought to church 24 boxes which were distributed to church members to help pass out to the homeless. Her report outlining her idea and the giving out of the boxes to members of the congregation

to distribute from their own cars produced more donations and Kids of Compassion has grown from there.

In the first two years Kids of Compassion received over \$6000 in money and products and over 700 boxes of supplies and food have been passed through open car windows to help and encourage people in need.

For more information visit <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=goWnIBCpbis>

Team-Building Activity

Building a culture of good character requires building the class into a community. Here is this month's teambuilding activity:

Egg Drop



Divide the class into groups of 4 - 6 students in each group. Each group should be provided with a raw egg in the shell or a candy-coated cream egg. Instruct them to construct something for their egg so that when it is dropped, the outer shell will not break. Show them the height from which it will be dropped such as the bottom of the chalk ledge or a particular bookshelf. You may provide each group with materials to work with or have a common stash of stuff to use. Some suggestions are: packing peanuts, bubble wrap, popsicle sticks, yarn, felt, straws, string, and tape. Give them a short amount of time to work and then let each group test their idea. When they are done, explain that they spent lots of time thinking about how to keep their egg from getting hurt. We need to put that same effort into making sure that we do not do things to hurt our classmates.



Where does it Hurt?

The concept of compassion is a focus on healing the hurts of others. This activity will simply show the ways that individuals can be hurting and the ways that we can help. You will need Band-Aids and either flower or smiley stickers, enough so that each student has one Band-Aid and several smiley stickers. Begin a discussion of the definition of Compassion. Discuss the two ways that people can be hurting – physically and emotionally. Physical hurts include bodily injuries as well as those who suffer without food or clean water. Emotional hurts are those we feel in our heart. Be sure to focus the discussion on the types of hurts that students can cause each other such as being excluded (emotional bullying) or being pushed around and called names (physical bullying). Distribute the Band-Aids to each student and instruct them to wear it someplace on their hand or arm so that all are reminded of the types of hurts there are. They can put them on skin or clothing. Next pass out several smiley stickers (any positive/happy sticker will do) so that each student has several. Next you will call upon the students to heal each other's hurts by placing smiley stickers on each other's Band-Aids. First, have everyone put a smiley sticker on the Band-Aid of the person to their left. Then instruct everyone to heal the person to their right. Do the same for the person in front of and in back of each of them. Use directions that are appropriate for how the desks are arranged. Once the exercise is done, start a discussion on how you can tell someone is hurting. Ask the class for examples of how you can show compassion to someone when you think they are hurting.



Broken Heart

To prepare for this activity, find or create a simple picture of large heart. Cut the heart into small pieces so that there is one piece for each student. You may get as creative in cutting apart the heart as you wish; just make sure that the students will be able to re-assemble the heart. As you begin this activity, remind the students of the discussion about the types of hurts. Distribute a piece of the heart to each student. Have each student write their name on the piece they receive. Now challenge the students to heal this broken heart by re-constructing the pieces. To make it easier, you may want to have the outline of the actual heart, drawn on a piece of cardboard or on a bulletin board. If a student is missing, save them a piece. Once the heart is together (even if it is missing a piece from an absentee), explain that as a group, the class has a heart. When any one of its members is hurting, the whole class hurts. That's why it doesn't make sense for students to hurt each other. When an absentee returns, be sure to let them add their piece to the heart. Leave this heart displayed in the classroom the rest of the month.





It's Not What You Think!



The purpose of this exercise is to help students understand that we each have our own way of looking at things based on our own experiences. To be compassionate towards someone else, we must look at their situations from their point of view. The first part of the exercise helps us understand our preconceived ideas that prevent us from solving the problems. For each example below, read the puzzle and ask for answers. Let them think awhile before you call for an answer. Some students may be familiar with these puzzles and you do not want a correct answer right away. Once you either get the right answer or give the answer, then ask them to identify the assumption that prevented getting the right answer right away.

Puzzle: A man and his son are in a car crash. The father is killed and the child is taken to hospital gravely injured. When he gets there, the surgeon says, 'I can't operate on this boy - for he is my son!!!' How can this possibly be?

Solution: The surgeon is his mother.

Puzzle: How could a baby fall out of a twenty-story building onto the ground and live?

Solution: The baby fell out of a ground floor window.

Puzzle: A man is wearing black. Black shoes, socks, trousers, coat, gloves and ski mask. He is walking down a back street with all the street lamps off. A black car is coming towards him with its headlights off but somehow manages to stop in time. How did the driver see the man?

Solution: It was daytime.

Puzzle: A woman had two sons who were born on the same hour of the same day of the same year. But they were not twins. How could this be so?

Solution: They were 2 boys of triplets.

The next step of this lesson is to apply it to being compassionate towards others. We need to understand their pain from their point of view and seek ways to help them. Being compassionate also calls us to be understanding when bad things happen to others or when bad things happen to us as a result of someone else.

Divide the students into groups of 4 - 7 students. Their assignment is to come up with scenarios where we can choose to be compassionate. Use this as an example: a student is walking fast through the halls, winding among the students all heading for class. The student bumps into you, causing you to lose your balance but you recover without falling down. You can choose to get angry or you can give them the "benefit of the doubt". (Be sure to quiz the students to determine if they know the meaning of that phrase.) Now ask them to brainstorm ideas that could justify this person's need to walk faster than the crowd. (Heading for the bathroom, found something in a classroom that someone forgot and they are trying to catch up to give it to them, etc.). Each group should construct a scenario like this example and come up with 1 or 2 reasons for the behavior. After each group has written their scenario, they will read it to the class and ask for ideas. When every group has had a chance to share, challenge the students to think compassionately when something happens to them.

Active Listening

Ask the class this question: “When you are in a conversation with someone, do you listen to them or just wait to talk?” Ask them what this means. Now prompt them to tell you how can you tell when someone isn’t really listening to you. Make a list on the board. (not looking at you, fiddling/distracted, no reaction, interrupts, etc.) Divide the class into groups, and assign each group one of the items on the board. You may group similar items and give them all to the same group. Have each group come up with the opposite behavior of the one they are assigned, a behavior that tells your speaker that you are listening. Each group should create a role-play where one person is speaking (talking about a vacation or a sport) and the listener first displays the behavior of not listening. Another member of the group will clap and the listener immediately changes behavior into the listening behavior. After each group is done, ask the class what the listener was doing wrong then ask what they did to listen correctly.

Here is a link for teaching active listening:

<http://schoolimprovement.com/strategy-of-the-week/teaching-students-active-listening-skills/>

This is the Kanji symbol for active listening. It is a compound symbol made of the symbols for



Ears -to hear

Eyes -to see

Attention - to focus

Mind - to think

Heart - to feel

For the Family

We are studying the character quality of **Compassion**: Investing whatever is necessary to heal the hurts of others. The opposite of Compassion is Indifference.

To practice Compassion I will:

- stop to help
- listen when others want to talk
- give of my resources to help those in need
- look for lasting solutions
- comfort others without regard to race, gender, faith, age, or nationality



Family Activity:

Compassion Quest - This month the family is challenged to learn about compassion by being compassionate. Start by discussing the definition of compassion being sure to include that it just isn't being caring or loving. Compassion seeks to help those who are suffering. Compassion extends from helping someone in a bad mood to helping feed a third world nation. This month complete your Compassion Quest by choosing 3 activities to do as a family where you can be compassionate to people, animals and the earth. Let the children participate in the decision making of what activities to do. Many activities can be performed in the home. Some ideas and links are below:

People

- Collect household and clothing items to donate to Goodwill
- Volunteer at a senior citizen home

Animals

- Build bird houses; feed birds or provide nesting material
- Volunteer at a pet shelter

Earth

- have one meatless meal a week to reduce your carbon footprint
- Start a compost pile

For some ideas for volunteering visit: <http://www.volunteermatch.org/>

Other ways to teach character in the home:

- Display the character quality and definition in a prominent place such as on the refrigerator or let each child decorate it for their bedroom door.
- At the dinner table ask if anyone noticed anyone (not just family members) demonstrating the character quality (or not demonstrating it).
- Point out news stories where character was or was not involved.
- Review the "I wills" and see if there are specific actions you can add to this list.
- During car trips, challenge the kids by describing scenarios and having them identify if it describes being the quality or being the opposite.
- Praise with character by recognizing the character quality involved rather than the achievement.
- For more ideas visit www.charactercincinnati.org/education.php

Croskey's Corner

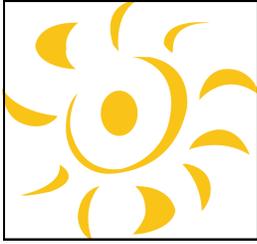
As I write this, Whitney Houston's *I Will Always Love You* is wafting through the house. Great song. Powerful voice. It reminded me of other great songs and their interpreters. Have you ever seen the movie *Funny Girl*? It is the biographical story of Fanny Brice, a vaudeville, Broadway, and radio star of the early to middle years of the Twentieth Century. The Fanny Brice story, in turn, made Barbra Streisand a Broadway, television, and movie star. Surely the song that epitomizes the show, Streisand's signature number, is "People." Her phrasing...the lyrical nuances she creates as she renders each note...I cannot imagine a better singer to perform it! (I know...I am talking about a has-been to some of you. She's Josh Brolin's stepmother, OK?!!) My favorite lyric from "People" is "A feeling deep in your soul/ Says you were half - now you're whole." Wow! That's lucky! It is a feeling of completion – and completeness. Being made whole! That is what healing is all about. Maybe falling in love is not YOUR idea of healing, but love could heal a wounded heart, couldn't it? That brings us to Compassion, the Character Quality of the Month. Its definition, "Investing whatever is necessary to heal the hurts of others," has the central notion of helping someone become whole.

I used to give students individual tests. One test asked students to define "compassion." If the student gave an answer which mentioned a feeling of caring for someone, that answer resulted in a score of "1." But if the student also described some action taken to make another person feel better, the score improved to "2." That test item reinforced to me that Compassionate healing involved more than caring; it also necessitated putting that caring feeling into action. So, if I want to act Compassionately, I am going to have to get off my...couch... and DO something!

Yet there is a cost to these feelings and actions. Here is an illustration. Maybe you have heard, as I have, an acquaintance say, "I could never be a social worker/therapist/nurse/teacher. I would be sure to bring my worries home with me. You'd have to be able to separate your personal and professional lives." When I would hear those words, I would bite my tongue.

You who are professional educators know that you aren't a unique species of human that can turn his or her emotions off and on at the beginning and end of the day. You care about your students all the time. Even if you can compartmentalize differing parts of your life, you can't really stop caring during your **off** hours. Perhaps you are able to sustain such an effort because you have discovered the concept of The Wounded Healer. Many years ago, a wise friend answered my worried question of how to stop caring at 5:00 PM with a book suggestion: The Wounded Healer by Henri Nouwen. This book proposes that in order to be an effective healer of emotional wounds, one must draw upon empathy. This happens when the healer reflects upon her previous wounds and what process she went through to heal them. Early on in your career, you learned that pity for those who need your help was NOT healing, and did not help much, either. Instead, you realized that you needed a relationship which offered a more equal standing between you and those you helped. Maybe Compassion originates in the empathy you feel because you know what it is like to be wounded; but Compassion's power comes , not from that hurt, but from knowing what it feels like to HEAL!

Educators get hurt, just like "regular" people. Our pain has been, at times, physical, and at other times, psychological. Few of us like feeling such pain. But my understanding of Compassion suggests that, in being wounded, we grow. Our visible scars may mar our appearance. But healed scars also make us more loveable because they detail our lives, and they are battle-tested experiences which can connect us with others. We use what we have learned, as we pieced ourselves back together, to ACT to help others heal, too. Half now? No, Whole!



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Character...It Starts With Me!

Character in the Classroom *Continuously*

There are many ways that you can teach the Character Quality of Month. Here are just a few suggestions:

- Ask students to make posters to hang in the classroom or around the school.
- Challenge students to find quotes, news stories, current (or classic) songs or movies that portray the character quality of the month. Be sure to share these with the class and “archive” these to use in future years.
- Add the character trait of the month to the spelling word list. (Even if it is posted in the classroom to copy!)
- Offer for students to make a video or write a rap that demonstrates the Character Quality of the Month.
- If you teach younger students, see if you can “borrow” some older students to lead your students in an activity or switch the roles and have the younger students “teach” a rhyme to the older students.
- If you teach older students, you can be the initiator in the previous activities.
- Invite local business leaders or small business owners to talk about the importance of a character trait. If you teach older students, aim to get a representative from a business that typically hires teens so that they can relate the importance of good character when applying for and *keeping* a job.
- Men and women in uniform usually make impressive guest speakers. Police departments, fire departments and military recruiting offices are usually willing to come into a classroom. Do not be afraid to give them specific requests or guidelines for speaking so that it is pertinent to the lessons of the month.
- Always have a generic character activity planned and ready to go that you can use as filler when you have time to kill or that a substitute teacher can use in your absence.