



ENGAGING MINDFULLY PRACTICE

6 Contemplations of Compassion

Bring to mind a person with whom you are having a hard time dealing. For example, we might imagine our relationship with an addict. Yes – we would probably all agree that it would be healthiest if the addict “should” end their addiction. But regardless of their choices, how do we handle this circumstance from a place of compassion and mindfulness?

1. **LOOK TO THE ROOTS:** How do we contemplate the person and the underlying reasons for their behavior or circumstances? What are their underlying needs (love, protection, safety, understanding, power)? In what ways are they wounded? Where are their intentions coming from in their choices? What vulnerability are they avoiding? Can we try to observe them without judgment?
2. **CULTIVATE COMPASSION:** How are they suffering? Can we feel compassion for this person’s suffering? Can you imagine them as innocent as the day they were born? What in their life brought them to this moment? Could we imagine experiencing a similar path? How can you express this understanding with grace?
3. **CONSIDER OUR SIMILARITIES:** How can we understand this from within? How are we similar? What has been our hardest experience with change or suffering? How have we coped in ways that harmed ourselves and others? How have we acted out of fear? Is there any way we have contributed to their suffering? How can we accept our interconnectedness?
4. **CONSIDER OUR NEEDS & ACCEPTING REALITY:** Though we may want this person to change, can we acknowledge the reality that this person may never stop his/her behavior or be able to change? If we are in relationship with the person, what do we need on a human values level, on a practical level? Can we ask for what we need and make choices given this reality?
5. **LISTENING FROM THE ESSENTIAL LEVEL:** What would be the highest possibility? What needs to be spoken to the other’s deepest nature? What would unconditional love or compassion dictate in this circumstance?
6. **CHOOSING TO RESPOND:** What is needed most now? What would you do? How can needs be expressed from a place of non-blaming or demanding, but from a statement of truth about essential values/qualities/needs for each of you?

Journal about how your understanding of this person has shifted in any way and how you might go about engaging with them with more compassion. Consider how you might take one proactive step towards engaging with them with more compassion. What role does compassion play in cultivating understanding and relationships?