

# September Cultivating Compassion



Compassion is the feeling of concern for others, coupled with the desire to help them and alleviate their suffering. Compassion differs from empathy because it involves a willingness to take action and affect positive change in the lives of those around us, rather than just putting ourselves in their shoes. Compassion is something that can be learned, practiced, and improved, and it's a key component of healthy and respectful relationships and environments.

## 5 Steps to Living and Interacting More Compassionately

1. Look for commonalities. See the ways you and others are the same, and envision yourself as a community or family of individuals who want the same basic things: safety, respect, and purpose.
2. Respect the struggles of others. Everyone, no matter how positive or successful, is dealing with something difficult in their life. Remember that before you pass a judgement or react with anger.
3. Find value in mistakes. When you or those around you make a mistake, look for the lesson rather than the negative outcome.
4. Don't be a sponge. Refrain from absorbing and adopting everyone's problems. Keep a healthy emotional distance so you don't become overwhelmed and incapable of helping anyone, including yourself.
5. Practice random acts of kindness. Get into the habit of doing small things for others without any expectation of reward or reciprocated action.

### Monthly Mindfulness Exercise: "I" Awareness

For one entire day, keep track of how frequently you use the word "I". Evaluate your findings, and reflect on your thoughts and actions. Should you try to be more/less assertive? More/less selfless?

