



Chalice Lighting

"Compassion is a verb." — Thich Nhat Hanh.

Check-in *Share your highs and lows since we last met, focusing on what drains you and what lifts you up. We give each other the gift of listening without asking questions or offering advice to allow people the safety to share what's in their hearts.*

Spiritual Exercises

Option B: Intentional Compassion

Our natural inclination to be compassionate sits right alongside many competing and conflicting instincts and urges. So it's not surprising that research indicates that our desire **to be more compassionate needs the support of us pairing it with a commitment to setting intentions**. Thus, for this exercise, you are challenged to engage in some intentional compassion. Here's one way to go about it:

- Set your intention as early in the day as you can.
- Prepare yourself by finding a private space where you can center yourself by bringing awareness to your breath and calming your body.
- Think about the day ahead of you and identify likely situations you will face where greater compassion might be needed.
- Then with that in mind set an intention related to those situations you've identified. Your intention can be as [general or specific](#) as feels right to you. Just make sure it is connected to the situation you want to focus on. For instance, a specific one might involve committing to being more compassionate with a particular co-worker or researching a social issue so you can figure out a way to get more involved, not just think about it. Similarly, a more general intention might have to do with a habit you want to cultivate, like being more encouraging with others or being less judgmental toward yourself. Click [HERE](#) for some ideas to get you thinking.
- Write down your intention in a few words on a small card or piece of paper that you can carry with you throughout the day.
- Revisit your intention throughout the day.
- At the end of the day, reflect on how your intention impacted your day.

Quotes for Inspiration/Readings

Compassion and empathy both refer to a caring response to someone else's distress. While empathy refers to an active sharing in the emotional experience of the other person, compassion adds to that emotional experience a desire to alleviate the person's distress.

~ From the Merriam-Webster Dictionary [merriam-webster.com/dictionary/compassion](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/compassion)

True compassion is more than flinging a coin to a beggar; it understands that an edifice that produces beggars needs restructuring. ~ Martin Luther King Jr.

We are being conditioned to shut down. The barrage of cruelty, confusion, spectacle, and spin... wears on our capacity to feel... That is the danger of this moment—not just political collapse or climate unraveling or the erosion of public trust—but the numbing of our souls... ~ [Rev. Cameron Trimble \(June 2025\)](#)

Compassion is not foolish. It doesn't just go along with what others want so they don't feel bad. There is a yes in compassion, and there is also a no, said with the same courage of heart... Buddhists call this the fierce sword of compassion. It is the powerful no of leaving a destructive family, the agonizing no of allowing an addict to experience the consequences of his acts. ~ Jack Kornfield

You are not required to set yourself on fire to keep others warm. ~ Unknown

When you avoid conflict to make peace with other people, you start a war within. ~ Cheryl Richardson

Those who do the most growing in this life are those who offer the most compassion to the parts of themselves that have not yet grown. ~ Andrea Gibson

We must admit—compassion is not always easy. Still, we choose it. Not because the world is kind, but because we can be. ~ David Breeden

Have compassion for everyone you meet,
even if they don't want it. What seems conceit,
bad manners, or cynicism is always a sign
of things no ears have heard, no eyes have seen.
You do not know what wars are going on
down there where the spirit meets the bone.
~ Miller Williams & sung by Lucinda Williams

Questions

Pick the one question that speaks to you most and let it lead you where you need to go. The goal is to figure out what being a part of a people of compassion means for you and your daily living.

1. When were you offered compassion in an unexpected or unique way?
2. Who is to thank for the way compassion "naturally" arises in you?
3. Where did your unkind and self-critical inner voice come from? Or maybe the better question is, whose unkind and self-critical voice taught your brain how to talk?
4. What do you need to do to stay tender and compassionate in the face of our consistently cruel political culture that wants you to go numb?
5. How would your feelings about and actions with that "difficult person" in your life change if you discovered they were doing the best they can or that their aggravating behavior is from a wound that runs deep?
6. In a world that needs so much compassion, many of us feel tangled up in and worn down by compassion fatigue. How might that struggle be eased if you more regularly asked yourself: What's mine to do? What's not mine to do? What's mine to say? What's not mine to say? What's mine to care about? What's not mine to care about?

Sitting in Silence *Take a few moments to sit quietly and reflect upon your thoughts.*

Sharing/Deep Listening *Respond with your thoughts and experiences with the topic. We create a safe space by listening deeply and not responding. When sharing, connect with what is true for you. When listening, give the speaker your full attention rather than thinking about what you will share.*

Reflection and Gratitude *This is a time to respond briefly to something another person said or to relate additional thoughts that may have occurred as others shared. Consider lifting up one comment or experience for which you are particularly grateful.*

Extinguishing the Chalice

...we were all broken from the same nameless heart
and every living thing wakes with a piece of that original heart
aching its way into blossom.

This is why we know each other below our strangeness.

Why when we fall, we lift each other

or when in pain, we hold each other.

Why when sudden with joy, we dance together.

Life is the many pieces of that great heart loving itself back together. ~ Mark Nepo, *The Exquisite Risk*