



From Empathy to Compassion to Compassionate Action

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Empathy is not a luxury skill. It is essential for our survival.

Safekeeper skill set requires adults to self-regulate

- Respond instead of react
- Realize we are all in this together (not us and them)
- Wish Well instead of judge
- Focus your attention on what you want and hold it there
- Accept the moment as it is (externally & internally)
- Choose thoughts that are helpful instead of hurtful
- Connect instead of control
- Reflect and be conscious of your intention

Our Intention

Intention directs the flow of information and energy in the body.

Intention primes the mind for maliciousness or kindness, which in turn shapes our inner life of body health and our outer life of relationships.

Our intention sets the directions of our ATTENTION and our CONNECTIONS.

When we set an internal intention toward:

1. Being kind
2. Being empathetic
3. Being compassionate

We create a mindset of integration throughout the brain and body that allows us to respect difference while simultaneously creating meaningful connections.

Power of Acceptance

Acceptance is the ability to allow people, circumstances, situations, emotions, and thoughts to be as they are. It is a conscious choice to not fight the experiences of your life. Swim downstream.

Old Belief

When the outside world is not going my way, the answer is to change those circumstances through force and effort. This shouldn't be. Swim upstream.

Acceptance is the most economical use of energy. Fighting against the entire universe takes an enormous amount of psychological resources.

Acceptance puts us in contact with our inner world of thoughts and feelings. It allows us to feel feelings without being overcome by them.

Empathy:

- Perceive the emotions of others – “I see you.”
- Resonate with them emotionally – “I feel you.”
- Cognitively take the perspective of others – “I understand you.”
- Distinguish between our emotions and others – “That makes sense.”

40% Reduction in Empathy

1. Reduction in unstructured free time for children (1981 – 2003, 35%).
Kindergarten today – 30 minutes less
2. Screen time
3. Self-Esteem Movement: “How great you are!”
4. Economic inequity beginning Reagan years. De-regulation and reducing taxes on the rich – greater gap between “us and them.”

Empathy: The capacity to sense the inner state of another person and see from their point of view. Empathy is required for any kind of closeness. Empathy cuts through the brain’s tendency to create an “us” and “them.”

- ▶ It is an effortful process requiring a willingness to temporarily give up our own thoughts and feelings to understand the thoughts and feelings of other people more accurately.
- ▶ Children who grow up surrounded by empathy develop a soothing self-inner voice.
- ▶ In environments where empathy is lacking or deficient, the child develops a punitive self-voice. This voice serves to keep you feeling, “You are not good enough.”
- ▶ The opposite of empathy is blaming.

Compassion: The way we sense the suffering of another, imagine ways of decreasing that suffering and then make attempts to help another reduce their suffering.

- | | |
|---|---------------------------|
| May all living beings be happy | May I be happy |
| May all living beings be healthy | May I be healthy |
| May all living beings be safe | May I be safe |
| May all living beings flourish and thrive | May I flourish and thrive |

Compassionate Action: Compassionate action involves the ability to regulate our own negative emotions and not react via the fight-flee-freeze response in the face of suffering of others. It involves the ability to stay regulated while face to face with someone’s suffering and distress. Practicing self-compassion is a pre-requisite for being able to offer compassionate action to others.

This type of self-regulation is indicated by greater parasympathetic activity via the vagal nerve, which is associated with the ability to self-soothe when stressed. Compassionate action is limited by our own ability manage our own distress first and then turn our attention to others.

Without offering self-compassion to ourselves, we will not be able to follow through on offering compassionate action to others.

To be truly compassionate, you must first feel something the other person is going through. You must have empathy, which cuts through the brain’s automatic tendency to create an “us” and a “them.”

Empathy to Compassionate Action

1. Emotional Empathy: I feel your pain
Begins shortly after birth
2. Cognitive Empathy: I see from your perspective
Girls = 13 years; Boys 15 years
3. Compassion: I inherently wish others be free from suffering
Begins shortly after birth
4. Compassionate action: I can help alleviate the distress of others and be of service
Begins around 14 months of age

Empathy is the highest cognitive skill possible and the one everyone needs to survive.

The Brain and Empathy & Compassion

1. We are genetically wired to be compassionate. Babies experience emotional contagion, a precursor to empathy and compassion.
2. By 14 months of age, toddlers begin seeking to comfort others in distress through moving closer to the distressed other, kissing or touching. Before words we know, “We are all in this together.”
3. Compassion is a natural response to suffering, including your own.
4. Brain scans show that compassionate action delights the giver of compassion.
5. To become happier, wiser and more loving, sometimes we have to swim against our mental models. Example: Compassion/Empathy is a sign of weakness or requires sacrifice.
6. We must develop the skill of empathy.

Self-Compassion

Self-compassion is not self-pity, but is a warm concern and good wishes- just like compassion for another person.

Self-compassion is more emotional than self-esteem, and therefore more powerful in reducing the impact of difficult conditions for building resilience. It opens your heart.

The Two Darts and Our Triggers

First darts in life are unpleasant moments, events, or people. However, our reactions to the first dart, called second darts, we throw at ourselves. Most of our suffering comes from the second dart we throw at ourselves for the mistakes we made while experiencing a first dart in life.

Example: You walk through the house and trip on shoes. through house and trip on shoes. First dart, “Ouch.” Second dart: “The shoes are always in the middle of the room. How many times do I have to say... NO ONE LISTENS TO ME.” Second darts often trigger more second darts through associative neural networks, for example you feel guilty about feeling angry about what someone else did.

Empathy and Racism

The brain has an innate mechanism to distinguish in-group and out-group members. People have been found to show greater activation in the amygdala when viewing fearful faces of their own race. Research shows that collectivist cultures are more tolerant of in-group and out-group bias than individualistic cultures. The more independent/individualistic the cultures the greater the sense of in-group favoritism in the brain.

The Conscious Discipline School Family creates a collectivist culture to align with our social brain and create a foundation of equity in schools/classrooms.

80% of all cultures are Collectivist

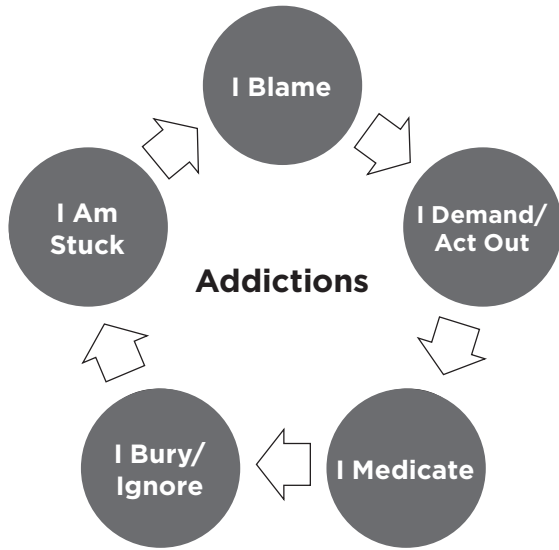
20% are Individualistic (mostly in the west)

NOTES

Five-Step Process

Unconsciously Reacting → Consciously Responding
Essential Foundation for Emotional Wellbeing and Resilience

The Cycle of Self-Sabotage



Healthy Relationships require we own our own upset. Look what you made me do!

The Cycle of Self-Regulation



Resilience = Unconscious to Conscious Team of Two

I Am Triggered

Brain's biological imperative is to survive.

We are automatically programmed to react to any cue indicating the possibility of danger.

I am in DANGER NOW!

I Calm

Breathe + Notice Non-Verbal Cues

We take 17,000 breaths per day. How many are you conscious of?

Breathing pauses us and slows down our inner rhythm.

Allows space and time for emotional regulation.

I Feel

Negative Emotions

Positive Emotions

Good vs. Bad Emotions

I feel bad = I am bad

As children, we can't distinguish our feelings from our "self."

If feelings aren't acceptable in certain situations, then neither am I.

While parents mean well and hate to see their children hurt, parents often deny their children's feelings. "Don't feel bad - you're okay."

Our response to our children's distress is the buffering agent, like a probiotic for wellbeing and resilience.

How many bits of information does the brain process?

11 million bits of information per second

We are conscious of 40 bits per second

The body gets your attention through emotions

10 things that happen when you hide your true feelings:

1. You disappear from the ones you love.
2. You forget to take care of yourself.
3. You tell everyone you are “fine.”
4. You start to develop anxiety.
5. You stay busy.
6. You have a constant need for control.
7. You seek out bad relationships.
8. Everything becomes a joke to you.
9. You create a false sense of positivity.
10. You present a tough exterior.

Natural Process: Emotions Become Feelings

- When the emotion rises to a level of consciousness (you are the last to know) we can name it, pulling the feeling out of the story in order to tame it.
- Feelings are conscious and manageable. We can regulate feelings.
Feelings happen now: Emotions stay with beliefs created at age _____.
- Cause and effect happen together.
- I’m worried that my child might not get into Harvard. (future)
- I’m so angry at what my mother-in-law did at my wedding. (past)
- I’m feeling something that hasn’t happened or already happened years ago.
Self-regulation requires the self-acting on itself instead of each other

“Emotions and thoughts are not the self but are felt and thought by the self.”
- Schmeichel and Baumeister, 2004

I Am Angry (1)

I have abandoned myself.

“You seem angry. You wanted _____.”

D.N.A. Process = Describe, Name, Acknowledge



A “You wanted _____.” or
“You were hoping _____.”

N “You seem _____?”
(Something Happened?)

Pause



Breathe



Download Calm

D “Your body is going like this.” (demonstrate)
“Your face is going like this.” (demonstrate)

D.N.A. Process keeps both child and adult present (conscious)

D = **D**escribing - Keeps the adult present

- Helps child become aware of body and facial expressions
- Body and facial awareness are critical components of empathy
- Facial and vocal signals serve to nonverbally communicate our inner states to others
- Encourages eye contact for downloading

D.N.A. allows us to name our feelings

N = Naming - Gives those nonverbal expressions and sensations a name; always an educated guess.

“You seem _____.” OR “You sound _____.”

“Your body is telling me you might be feeling _____.”

Divides into Two

D.N.A. Integrates the Brain for Problem-Solving

A = Acknowledge - Provides conscious awareness of our true goals and aspirations, setting up problem solving or an action plan.

“You wanted _____.” OR “You were hoping _____.”

Whoever you believe to be in charge of your feelings has the power and the responsibility.

He/she is told “It’s time to clean up.”

“Your face is like this.”

“You seem frustrated.”

“You wanted to keep playing.”

“You may _____ or _____. What do you choose?”



Waiting in line for a long time:

Child begins to wiggle and kick pole.

Adult: “Your feet are going like this. Your face is going like this. Your body is telling me it is hard to wait.”

Child says, “I hate you!”

Adult: “You seem frustrated.”

Child starts fidgeting with the rope between the poles.

Adult: “Your arms are going like this. Your body is telling me you need help in thinking of something fun and safe to do.”

Homework left at home:

Student says, “Come on, give me a break. I did the work. I can bring it in tomorrow. This is stupid.”

Teacher: “You seem frustrated and rightly so. It is hard to complete an assignment and then forget to bring it in.”

Student says, “One time would not kill you.”

Teacher: “You were hoping I would change the rules about turning in work. You have time to bring your grade up. You can handle this.”

Student says/does _____.

Children come to us upset with a story of what happened based on their ability to perceive events without the filter of a prefrontal lobe.

“Nobody likes me. I don’t have any friends and you don’t care.”

“I had it first. He is being a jerk and a liar. You ALWAYS believe him!”

“The teacher hates me. I asked for help over and over. She ignored me and called me stupid!”

Giving information, lecturing or reasoning with the right brain yields:

- Emotional State ALWAYS wants understanding – not information.
- Rupture in the relationship and a disconnect in the brain, which impacts all learning.