

COMPASSION: BE A GOOD FRIEND TO YOURSELF

Kids, unfortunately I have learned the following lesson the truly hard way and pray you can avoid much of this in your life. If we don't love ourselves, we cannot really love someone else, if we cannot treat ourselves kindly it's difficult to treat other people kindly. How can we show compassion for our children and parents, if we are unable to find compassion for ourselves? If we can't accept our own faults, how do we accept the faults of others? If our compassion does not include ourselves, then how can it be complete compassion?

By finding self-compassion not only do we help ourselves, we help those around us and that is a beautiful thing. Let's remember that in moments of suffering this pain is part of life, and please remember to be kind to yourself in this moment. Please give this suffering the compassion it deserves, the kind of compassion you would give to your own child.

You might well ask yourself, why do I write about self-compassion so much? The clear answer is it is often harder for all of us humans to find compassion for ourselves than to find compassion for others. Over time, it has become clear to me that we all need self-compassion to have the best lives possible.

Even so, this is an area of life I personally failed in for years on end. After a lot of years and a lot of pain, I still don't completely understand why self-compassion is so hard to find. Not sure we will ever know the exact reasons so many of us do not practice enough self-compassion, but I expect many of us have this one thing in common: For whatever reason, we simply do not think we deserve it. This is a crucial delusion that costs us and our loved ones dearly. Practicing mindfulness will help us here, as we all suffer from defeats, mistakes, and misfortune and a little self-compassion goes a long way to help us find more beauty, kindness, love, and happiness.

THE GIFTS OF SELF-COMPASSION

Self-compassion often sets the stage for us to be:

Better partners

Better parents

Better friends

And to have:

Better health

Better careers

Better Lives

DOWN WHERE THE SPIRIT MEETS THE BONE

Lucinda Williams' song "Compassion" urges everyone to have compassion for our fellow humans and these words ring very true in the world we live in.

"Always a sign of things no ears have heard,
Always a sign of things no eyes have seen
You don't know what wars are going on there,
Down there where the spirit meets the bone
Down there where the spirit meets the bone
Down there where the spirit meets the bone"

We all know too well the pain we suffer from and most often rise above, but we simply can't know the same of most people we encounter. We simply have no idea of their pain, their issues, their hurt, their background, and so much more. Perhaps we know a little of their life story, but it's difficult to know it all.

I've tried to live with the practice of compassion for others as much as possible, though I have often failed here. I have always had an enormous amount of compassion for the downtrodden in the world, and it's likely watching my parents up close and personal and the misfortune they faced that made me feel like that. Unfortunately, my compassion for the well off was not as easy. For some unknown reason, probably jealousy and envy, I felt if they had more money and power than most of us, they did not deserve much of my compassion, I was simply wrong. You know, it's a funny thing when we have more compassion for others, we are happier ourselves.

THE MICROPHONE

I recently looked up the definition of compassion in a dictionary. "A strong feeling of sympathy and sadness for the suffering or bad luck of others and a wish to help them."

Of course, this is an apt description of compassion, but what it fails to mention is compassion is truly meant for both others and for ourselves. I have no idea why it took me so long to understand and accept this fact.

It's a bit embarrassing to admit to you that I gave the terrible thoughts in my head a loud microphone. Whether it was the unfairness of my upbringing, the unfairness of our wealthy competitors in business, or the unfairness of my family situation, they all took up

a loud space in my head. How many times did I literally hand them the microphone and let them live rent-free roaring in my head? How dumb was I to do this? And at the end of the day none of these thoughts were true, as how many hundreds of millions of people had it one hundred times worse than I ever did. Kids, simply let these thoughts come in, have their brief moment and let them pass on. It sure beats handing them a microphone.

SELF-COMPASSION IS NOT A SELFISH ACT

Children, I wasted many years of my life not having remotely enough self-compassion and I paid a heavy emotional price for that. Unfortunately, so did many of the people closest to me, and for this I am very sorry. How can it help a twelve-year-old child watch their father getting extremely angry? How does it help watching their father get drunk and act stupid and belligerent? How did it help Susan with me being so frustrated so often? Obviously, I let our family down by not controlling my emotions properly.

I am very sorry I hurt all of you with this poor behavior. After each of these situations occurred, not only had I hurt you, but I hated myself for acting so foolishly. Had I found self-compassion earlier in my life I know these actions and behaviors would not have occurred near as often, if at all.

The more we reject ourselves the more exhausting it is for us and our loved ones. Please do not think practicing compassion for yourself is a selfish act, it is a necessary practice for all of us. As a result of doing this we will develop even more kindness, love, and compassion for others.

With the world being as competitive as it is, we can always feel inferior to others and berate our own shortcomings. We will always have more peace and less anxiety and stress by being kind to ourselves.

Children, remember you are very much loved by all of us, remember you are very worthy of contentment and happiness in your life. Remember to learn from my mistakes as it took me into my early fifties before I could find this crucial self-compassion. Do not watch your children watch you being unkind to yourselves and the actions that often follow.

WHICH VOICE NEEDS MORE OF OUR ATTENTION?

One day I was talking with my daughter as we joyfully watched one of her daughters control the room around all of us. I said to her, "The only thing as loud as the voice of a four-year-old is the voice in our head." We laughed together but later I wondered, which of these voices needs more of our attention? At first it felt like an easy question to answer because of course, the grandchild is a beautiful young person whom we love being with and watching grow up. Can't say the same about the voice in our head, which is often

negative and self-critical. The more I pondered it, though, the more I realized they both need a lot of our kind and compassionate attention.