

Presented by BU Happiness College

Difference Between Compassion, Empathy & Sympathy

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Compassion is fuelled by understanding and accepting that we're all **made of strength and struggle** - no one is immune to pain or suffering.

Compassion is not a practice of 'Better than' or 'I can fix you' - It's a practice based in the beauty and pain of shared humanity.

- **Brene Brown** Atlas of the Heart





Compassion vs Self Compassion

Compassion

Compassion is shared suffering.

Compassion is the daily practice of recognising and accepting our shared humanity so that we treat ourselves and others with loving-kindness.

It becomes a daily practice that we can use to take action in the face of suffering. It's not just feeling, it's action/doing.

Self Compassion

Self compassion is a way of recharging our batteries. It allows us to fill up our internal reserves so we have more to give to those who need us.

Notes:



The 2 types of Empathy

Empathy is a skill set that is one of the most powerful tools of compassion. It's an emotional skill set that allows us to understand **what someone is experiencing and to reflect back that understanding.**

It is understanding what someone is feeling, **not feeling it for them.**



Empathy



Cognitive Empathy

Is the ability to recognise and understand another persons emotions.

Affective Empathy

Affective empathy, often called **experience sharing**, is ones own emotional attunement with another persons experience.



Empathy is a tool of **Compassion**.

We can respond empathetically only **if we are willing to be present to someone's pain.**

If we're not willing to do that, it's not real empathy.

I believe meaningful connection requires a combination of compassion & cognitive empathy.

- **Brene Brown** Atlas of the Heart





Oppositions of Compassion

Sympathy & Pity

Compassion is the readiness of the heart to respond to one's own or another's pain without despair, resentment, or aversion. It is the wish to dissipate suffering. - **Jack Kornfield**

Sympathy

Rather than being a tool for connection, sympathy emerged in the data as a form of disconnection. It's something that creates a safe distance between you & someone else & can even be a trigger for shame.



Pity

Pity is the near enemy of compassion. It sets up a separation between ourselves and others, a sense of distance and remoteness from the suffering of others that is affirming and gratifying to the self.



4 Elements of Pity

1 - A belief that the suffering person is inferior

2 - A passive, self-focused reaction that does not include providing help

3 - The desire to maintain emotional distance

4 - Avoidance of sharing in the other person's suffering.

Empathy is not **Sympathy**.

In fact, using the near enemy concept, we can definitely consider sympathy the near enemy of empathy.

- **Brene Brown** Atlas of the Heart



3 Steps to Begin Cultivating



Journal Prompt: What would it look like for me to practice Compassion & Self Compassion skills?

Journal Prompt: Where might practicing Empathy be more valuable and impactful for others & myself?



Journal Prompt: Where could I try flipping Sympathy & Pity to Compassion & Empathy? How might that look?



A close-up photograph of a person's hands holding a pen and writing in a spiral notebook. The person is wearing a dark-colored shirt. The background is softly blurred, showing what appears to be a window with light-colored curtains.

Key Takeaways

Takeaway 1...

Takeaway 2...

Takeaway 3...