

# Diary of a Psycho Therapist

## COMPASSION

“ Our human compassion binds us the one to the other - not in pity or patronizingly, but as human beings who have learnt how to turn our common suffering into hope for the future. ”  
- Nelson Mandela.



Compassion is the feeling that we experience when we are confronted by the suffering of another and motivated to relieve that suffering. Though related to altruism, it isn't the same thing. Altruism is a selfless concern, although both concepts are certainly intertwined. Compassion often gets confused with sympathy or even empathy. Whilst sympathy says, 'I care' and empathy strives to 'feel', compassion works towards 'alleviating' the suffering of another.

When I think of compassion, it is an attribute that is honourable and true and is more than simply giving to others. It is the gift of caring without judgement in the moment. When we extend compassion, there is much in the doing and even more in the being. Being there, being present, being kind, being thoughtful and being fair. Giving a space to breathe to those we value and protect is a way in which we can practice compassion without compromise. A listening ear, a warm hug, or a smile often go a long way. A text message, or a telephone call to say, 'I care' can make a world of difference to the receiver. A mind that does not judge but is open to the idea that we all have different journeys and will stumble over different stones along the same unpredictable path, is a compassionate mind.

A compassionate friend can be a calming voice, a nurturing gentle presence and companion. A friend with whom you can share your faults, failings and fears. A compassionate friend is one who gives advice when needed. One who sits quietly like the friend who visited Job in his moments of bereavement, a friend who understands the power of compassion and what it means to reserve judgement. When I have practiced compassion myself, I have sometimes had to take a breath and set aside prejudices and my own gaps in understanding to simply support another in moments of distress. I haven't always found this easy but my need to be compassionate is engrained as one of my own core values. I have been fortunate to receive the same compassion back from friends in different ways. A telephone call to say, "What can I do to help right now?" A chat over a cherished mug of coffee, or a knock on the door has given me comfort in knowing that I'm loved.

I often say to my friends, "Have you come to me for solutions or comfort? Come, sit with me, let's share our thoughts over cups of tea. I will not judge you and I will strive to be kind. To give you a safe space and lift you in spirit and time. I understand I have not walked in your shoes, and you have not walked in mine."

Without doubt, wherever we plant seeds of loving kindness, the prettiest of gardens will grow, vibrant in colours and teeming with life in abundance. The tender trails of kindness will take root in the most unexpected places. We will not always yield good crops, nor always benefit from our harvest, but our souls will know we did what we did because we were moved with compassion to give a coin to the homeless person on the street, to shop for the sick or to help a friend in need. We will know that we gave compassion freely and unconditionally.

In the wise words of Brene Brown, "When we're looking for compassion, we need someone who is deeply rooted, is able to bend and, most of all, embraces us for our strengths and struggles." We all have it in us to show compassion. Let's go forth with an open and compassionate mindset. Why not pick up the phone and send a message to that friend who has dropped off the grid a bit and ask, "Are you ok?" Be patient with the person rushing along the supermarket aisles this week and don't forget to exercise compassion whenever the opportunity arises.

THRIVE &  
SHINE

Tara x