

WEEK ONE

COMPASSION AS A WAY OF LIFE

A RIGHT TO BE HERE

My own space, my own solitude,
my own this, my own that—
tribalism grown through centuries
wants to protect, claim, shut out.

Here by the river with its quiet flow
another human being arrives,
parks his car next to mine,
and the old brain in me leaps up,
shouts silently, “Stay away from me!”

My newer brain intervenes,
“He has every right to be here,
to make breakfast by the river,
to enjoy the peaceful beauty
same as I am doing now.”

He takes the bag of charcoal,
piles the briquettes on the grill,
and I pull back my defenses,
glad now that he, too, wants
to take in the breath of creation.

“We are one,” I say to those I teach.
Now I practice it, take it in, make it mine.
Oops, there I go again, “mine”—
the ancient brain claiming things,
caught in the old tribal language
that refuses to go away.

~ Joyce Rupp

WEEK 1, DAY 1

AWARENESS, ATTITUDE, ACTION

INTEGRATION

Of the three components of compassion—awareness, attitude, action—which do you find most difficult to live? What makes this challenging for you? How might you approach this so it becomes less difficult?

Compassion impels us to work tirelessly to alleviate the suffering of our fellow creatures, to dethrone ourselves from the center of our world and put another there, and to honor the inviolable sanctity of every single human being, treating everybody, without exception, with absolute justice, equity and respect.

~ The Charter for Compassion¹

WEEK 1, DAY 2

THE SEEDS OF COMPASSION

INTEGRATION

Which of the four seeds of compassion—nonjudgment, nonviolence, forgiveness, mindfulness—could most use some tending in the garden of your heart? List some ways you can nurture this seed. What might the divine Gardener say to you about this?

The seeds sown in our lives are, in reality, seeds of our potential. They are sparks of the divine. They must take root in the earthiness of our lives and grow.

~ Macrina Wiederkehr, *The Song of the Seed*²

WEEK 1, DAY 3

BEHIND EVERY SCAR, A STORY

INTEGRATION

Call to mind someone whom you judge disapprovingly or someone whom you wish to change in order to meet your criteria. Imagine you are standing behind that person's back, looking out through his or her eyes. What do you see? How might this person be hurting?

This ability to have empathy for difference, to be open to diversity, to work hard at thinking about how other people may differ from you is a key step on the road to compassion—and it's not always easy.

~ Paul Gilbert, *The Compassionate Mind*³