

Compassion

Syllables

com•pas•sion

Pronunciation

kuhm-pash-uhn

Definition

Understanding the suffering of someone else and wanting to help.
(*Barry's **compassion** caused him to remove his warm gloves and give them to the old man who sat shivering on the sidewalk.*)

Simply put: caring enough to do something for someone else.

Related Terms

Empathy: Understanding the feelings of others.

Sympathy: Sharing the sadness of someone who is suffering.

Fundamental Question:

How can I show compassion for someone in my community?

Students will investigate the idea that they hold the power to help those who are suffering.

Objectives

Each student will:

1. Consider ways in which people in the local community might be in need or otherwise suffering;
2. Participate with the class in identifying groups or organizations that assist local community members in need of help; and
3. Join the group or organization at least once in its effort to ease the suffering of others.

Before you begin

- Collect several brief articles about local individuals in need.
- Print out one copy of *A Friendly Reminder* for each student.

Suggested Sidebars:

Speaking of Compassion (Discussion Idea)

Is compassion a feeling ... or an action? Is a person who sees someone suffering, feels very badly, and wants to help but does nothing a compassionate person?

Taking It to the Next Level

Are you interested in learning more about lives of people who are homeless?

Read Felicia Holman's book *Secret City, U.S.A.* Atheneum (May 1990).

(Recommended for ages 10 and up)

Compassion

Procedure

1. Read each of the newspaper articles aloud to your class, deleting any references to locale. Afterward say: “There are many people in our world who are in need. Where do you think the events in the first article took place?” (Allow for answers, but do not respond except, perhaps, to ask how the students came to their conclusions.) “How about the events in the second article? (Repeat this procedure for each article.)” When all of the guesses are in, explain to your students that each of the articles was about people in your own community; perhaps people they see every day.
2. Say: “Fortunately, there are organizations in our community that are trying very hard to help our neighbors in need. One group that I know about is _____. (Tell a little bit about the group and its efforts.) How can we find out about other helping-organizations in our area?” (Record the students’ ideas on the board: look in the phone book, check on the Internet, ask a reference librarian, call the Chamber of Commerce, etc.)
3. Divide the class into five or six committees, with each committee focusing on a specific needs-related theme (food, clothing, shelter, literacy, and illness, for example). Guide the students as they try to find local organizations and other resources that respond to the needs highlighted by their committees.
4. Review letter-writing and phone-calling etiquette and safety. Work with the students to contact the organizations in effort to find out how the children can help those in need.
5. If possible, arrange for the students (and room parents or chaperones) to volunteer to assist one or more of the organizations in helping others.
6. **Follow Up:** Distribute and ask the students to complete the *A Friendly Reminder* pages. Display the pages on a “Compassion” or “Building Character” bulletin board.

Name _____

Reminder: Compassion means understanding the suffering of someone else and wanting to help.

A Friendly Reminder

Using carefully chosen words, an inspiring illustration, and the outline below, design a billboard to remind people how important it is to have compassion for each other.



Today's Thought: *Although the world is full of suffering, it is full also of the overcoming of it.*
— **Helen Keller, author, educator, and activist**