



COMPASSION

February's Key to Character—2012

Definitions

Elementary: Concern for the misfortune of another paired with the wish to help

Secondary: Deep awareness of the suffering of another coupled with the wish to relieve it

Related Words or Phrases

concern	tenderhearted	empathy
kindness	consideration	care
sympathy	humanity	charity

Sunshine State Standards

HE.K.B.2.2/HE.1.B.2.2—Demonstrating listening skills to enhance health.

SS.K.C.2.1—Demonstrate the characteristics of being a good citizen.

SS.1.C.2.1—Describe the characteristics of responsible citizenship in the school community.

HE.3.B.2.3—Demonstrate nonviolent strategies to manage or resolve conflict.

HE.4.B.2.2—Identify refusal skills and negotiation skills that avoid or reduce health risks

HE.5.B.2.3—Illustrate effective conflict resolution strategies.

HE.6.B.2.1/HE.7.B.2.1/HE.8.B.2.1—Determine strategies to improve effective verbal and nonverbal communication skills to enhance health.

HE.6.B.3.3/HE.7.B.3.3/HE.8.B.3.3—Distinguish when individual or collaborative decision making is appropriate.

HE.912.B.2.1—Explain skills needed to communicate effectively with family, peers and others to enhance health.

HE.912.B.3.3—Assess whether individual or collaborative decision making is needed to make a healthy decision.

People display compassion in many ways. Children and youth can better understand this trait when they have an understanding of what compassionate actions look like and sound like. They will then be more likely to incorporate the behaviors below into their daily lives.

What Compassionate People Say:

- ◇ "You look upset."
- ◇ "I understand how you feel."
- ◇ "I'm sad that you got hurt."
- ◇ "That happened to me too, once. It makes me feel sad for you."
- ◇ "I'm so sorry that happened. Let me help."
- ◇ "I bet it hurts a lot."
- ◇ "What can I do to help?"

What Compassionate People Do:

- ◇ Notice when people are hurting, and show that they feel for them
- ◇ Feel sad when they see someone crying or hurt
- ◇ Console others in pain
- ◇ Talk soothingly to those in pain
- ◇ Listen patiently to someone's problems, without interrupting
- ◇ Mirror facial expressions of the distressed person
- ◇ Volunteer time and resources to charity
- ◇ Encourage others to practice compassion



"If you want others to be happy, practice compassion. If you want to be happy, practice compassion."—Dalai Lama



Parent Corner



"Emotional Coaching"

John Gottman, author of Raising and Emotionally Intelligent Child and professor of psychology at the University of Washington, conducted two ten-year studies of 120 families. He discovered that children of parents who acted as "emotional coaches" learned to acknowledge and master their emotions better, were more self-confident, and were physically healthier. Additionally, they scored higher in reading and math, had better social skills, and had lower levels of stress.

There are five parts to the technique of "emotional coaching."

1. **Recognize the emotion.** Most likely, you already know what behavior your child will display if he is denied what he wants. What's the emotion behind the behavior? For example, how would your child react if he was promised a trip to the park, but couldn't go because it was raining. While he may throw a temper tantrum, emotionally his anger may stem from deeper feelings of disappointment. Start viewing displays of emotion, both positive and negative, as a time ripe for teaching, connecting to and helping your children become responsible adults. Don't forget that the most powerful teaching tool is modeling. Children naturally emulate what they see.
2. **Build connections.** When a child becomes overwhelmed with emotion, remain calm. Don't try to reason with a child during an emotional outburst. Tell the child that once they are calm, you can talk about what happened. Encourage your child to talk by saying something like, "Tell me what happened." or "Tell me what's going on." Then listen.
3. **Listen empathetically.** Listen to what your child has to say and check to make sure you understand by summarizing what you heard. In the park example above, you might say, "I hear you saying that you want to go to the park because you have been cleaning your room all day and are bored and now you can't go because it is raining."
4. **Label the emotion.** Finding the best word to describe an emotion can be tricky. It is easy to label emotions as "sad, happy, or mad," but deeper, more vulnerable feelings, may be more difficult to label. Help your children label these feelings as well. Remember, more than one emotion can happen at a time, and sometimes conflicting emotions can happen at the same time. Once you have listened to your child, ask, "How does that make you feel?" Make sure that you label the feeling if they cannot. For example, you could say, "Sounds like you are really disappointed because you couldn't go to the park. Is that right?"
5. **Set limits and problem solve.** You have talked about the situation and labeled the feelings. However that is only half of the equation for building emotionally-balanced problem-solvers. Next, you have to let the child know a line was crossed. For example, you might say, "I know you were disappointed because you couldn't go to the park, but it is not okay to yell and slam your bedroom door." Second, the child needs to decide what he should do differently next time or how he can make things better. You can initiate this by asking, "What should you have done differently?" or "How can you make this better?"

Sometimes part of a solution may be to apologize to the person which was offended. Children should not be forced into saying the words, "I'm sorry." Often, they are not sorry and only half-heartedly say the words. Instead, have children say, "I apologize for disrespecting you. Would you please forgive me?" At that point, the offended party can either forgive or not forgive. No matter the outcome, the offender has done his part.



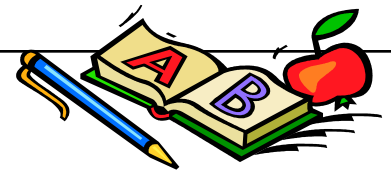
"A Glass of Milk"

Based on a true story about Dr. Howard Kelly, a founding physician of Johns Hopkins

A poor boy, who was selling goods door to door to pay his way through school, found he had only one thin dime left, and he was hungry. He decided he would ask for a meal at the next house. However, he lost his nerve when a lovely young woman opened the door. Instead of a meal he asked for a drink of water. She thought he looked hungry so she brought him a large glass of milk. He drank it slowly, and then asked, "How much do I owe you?" "You don't owe me anything," she replied. "Mother has taught us never to accept pay for a kindness." He said..... "Then I thank you from my heart."

Years later that young woman became critically ill. The local doctors were baffled. They finally sent her to the big city, where they called in specialists to study her rare disease. Dr. Howard Kelly was called in for the consultation. When he heard the name of the town she came from, a strange light filled his eyes. Immediately he rose and went down the hall of the hospital to her room. Dressed in his doctor's gown he went in to see her. He recognized her at once. He went back to the consultation room determined to do his best to save her life. From that day he gave special attention to the case. After a long struggle, the battle was won. Dr. Kelly requested the business office to pass the final bill to him for approval. He looked at it, then wrote something on the edge and the bill was sent to her room. She feared to open it, for she was sure it would take the rest of her life to pay for it all. Finally she looked, and something caught her attention on the side of the bill. She read these words..... "Paid in full with one glass of milk."

Teacher's Corner



COMPASSION—A Nonverbal Emotion

Reading nonverbal communication is key to the development of compassion. Yet, it is a difficult skill for many children and youth. Some activities you can do with your students to help develop this important skill are:

1. Play "Guess the Feeling." This is a take off on charades. To get ready, brainstorm as many different feeling words as you can and write each on an index card. As each student draws a card, he/she is to act out the emotion using only his or her body. No words are allowed. Everyone else tries to guess the emotion that is being acted out.
2. Make comic mood characters. With your students, cut out pictures from newspapers and magazines showing people depicting a wide array of different emotions. After gluing them on paper, guess together how each person feels based on nonverbal clues. Draw balloons over each person's head and write appropriate words to express what the character might say based on his/her body language.
3. Read with Feeling! Read the same passage with inflection for several different emotions (excited, tired, sad, angry, etc.) and challenge your students to identify the tone. Take turns reading or role-playing the same passage or different ones with your students.
4. Watch TV silently. Turn off the sound and watch the show together. Make a game out of trying to guess how the actors feel from what you see. Point out the kinds of nonverbal behaviors that show feelings (clinched fists, tightened jaw, blinking eyes, twirling hair, rolling eyes, looking away, etc.).

(Borba, Michelle, Ed.D., *Building Emotional Intelligence*, pp. 33-34)

Multi-Day Lesson Plan: Compassion

Grade: Any (Modify for any grade level)

Subject: Open

Time Needed: Several Classes/Sessions

Materials/Resources Needed: Poster board for each class, cut to represent a recipe card, and *The Giving Tree*, by Shel Silverstein

Objective: To strengthen students' understanding of the virtues of caring and compassion

Focus and Review: Introduce the concept of compassion by asking students what this word means to them. Explain to the class that kindness, compassion, understanding, and helping are ways to show we care. Receiving and giving care are things we all naturally seek, and children easily embrace empathy for others. Caring about another, whether a parent, friend, or plant, allows children to feel powerful, needed and appreciated. We practice compassion by showing that we care, appreciating kindness and giving as caring gestures, cultivating a caring attitude, and by participating in a project that reaches beyond the classroom.

Activity 1: A Recipe for Caring: Students brainstorm qualities that make a caring person and write their ideas on the board (examples: kindness, helping others, love, sharing, understanding, compassion). As a class, decide on the "ingredients" for their "caring recipe." Next, decide on the directions. (Example: Start with a big heart. Add one cup of kindness. Mix in compassion and understanding. Stir in a large scoop of sharing and a sprinkle of hope. Top with compliments.) On a large recipe card cut from poster board, have students write their recipe for caring. Display it in the hallway for everyone to enjoy.

Activity 2: Words = Attitude: Tell students that sometimes just the words they choose can make a difference in showing compassion. Write the following phrases on the board. Have students decide if they convey an attitude of kindness and caring (positive) or an attitude of selfishness and anger (negative).

Would you be so kind?	How can I ever thank you?	It was a pleasure.	It's about time.
This will teach you.	It's the least I can do.	It's a wonder you didn't break it!	You can sit by me and hang out.
How dare you!	No hurry.	It was no big thing to help you.	Something bothering you today?
I'm sure you can do it.	Too bad for you.	You got what you deserved.	Whatever!

Activity 3: Compassion Project: Learning about caring does not guarantee that caring will become part of a person's character. To cultivate caring/compassion, we must do caring things. From now until the end of school have students bring in items for Talbot House/Goodwill/Salvation Army (or another homeless shelter). Send a note home to parents about the project and list what is needed each month. Do a little research and adjust the sample list below to meet the needs of your selected shelter.

February - paper towels, bathroom tissue, soap, toothpaste, toothbrush, combs/brushes, deodorant, baby clothes/blankets

March - aluminum foil, Ziploc bags (all sizes), Saran Wrap, trash bags (gallon), grocery bags, Band-Aids

April - sugar, flour, salt, pepper, oil, shortening, baby diapers, socks (new)

May—canned vegetables/meats/fruits/soup, peanut butter and jelly, children's sleepwear, reading glasses

June- rice, macaroni, instant potatoes, tea bags, dry milk, bottled water, coloring books and crayons

Activity 4: A Caring Tree: Caring is not reserved for just people and pets. Show students that taking care of our environment and resources is a responsibility we all must share. Read Shel Silverstein's book, *The Giving Tree*. In this story a tree gives all that she has to give to a boy whom she loves. After reading the story, have students reflect and answer the following questions: Why did the tree keep giving things to the boy? What did the boy give the tree in return? Did the boy really care about the tree? What can you do to show you care for trees and other living things? Have students share their responses.

Closure: How can we show compassion to people, pets, and the environment every day? You can experience the joy of giving of yourself and realize the benefits of being both the giver and a receiver.

—NCPS—Character Education—Jean Tapley

Compassionate Stories for Black History Month



Imagine a world where people treated you fairly - a world where you were judged only by the content of your character, not on your religious beliefs, color of skin, or economic status. Imagine a world where people respected the Golden Rule like a badge of honor - where "treat others as you would have them treat you" was exactly how people treated you and, in turn, how you treated others.

Isn't that a very strong part of what Black History Month is about? Black History Month helps us focus not only on the history and struggles of African-Americans in this country, but also challenges us to develop compassion as we recognize and reflect upon the dangers of prejudice, bigotry and racism in a broader perspective.

During February, we can look at several books that address this subject in different ways. There are many others on the shelves of your libraries and bookstores. Read such books to children, talk with them, and remind children to always put themselves in the other person's shoes. Then reinforce your teaching by being an example worth imitating.

Princess of the Press: The Story of Ida B. Wells-Barnett, by Angela Shelf Medearis, Dutton Juvenile, 1997, 48 pages (Ages 7 and older)

When Ida B. Wells boarded a train on May 4, 1884, she paid full fare but was told she had to sit in the dirty, crowded smoking section because she was black. Ida refused and was thrown off the train. Ida took the railroad to court, and in doing so, changed the course of her life by embarking on a lifelong crusade as a civil rights activist.

Becoming a journalist and later the owner of a number of black newspapers, Ida B. Wells was particularly vocal in her condemnation of the frequent and widespread lynchings of African-Americans at that time. She also took on several other civil rights issues, including the right of women to vote.

I, Dred Scott: A Fictional Slave Narrative Based on the Life and Legal Precedent of Dred Scott, by Sheila P. Moses and Bonnie Christensen, McElderry Books, 2005, 92 pages (Ages 10 and older)

Dred Scott was born into slavery in the late 1700s. Compared to most slaves, Scott was treated fairly well by his first owner, growing up with his owner's children and forming friendships that proved in later years to be very important.

When Scott was an adult, his owner changed several times. Later, he and his wife took a bold and dangerous step when they sued for their freedom. Their legal battle lasted for 11 years. They were aided by local people in their community and the grown children Scott had been raised with. Shortly before Scott died, he and his wife finally became free.

Friend on Freedom River, by Gloria Whelan, Sleeping Bear Press, 2005 (ages 6—8)

In December 1850, the Detroit River freezes making it very dangerous for boats to travel on it. A young boy, Louis, has been put in charge of things while his father is away. Before his father leaves, he instructs his son: "If you don't know what to do, just do what you think I would have done."

Soon thereafter, Louis is approached by runaway slaves who ask him for help. They need Louis to row them across the river to freedom in Canada. His father had ferried many runaway slaves across the Detroit River, and despite the dangers, Louis knew he had to try. He thought he could make it across, but would he have the strength to make it back again?

The Color Purple, by Alice Walker, Mariner Books, 2006, 304 pages (ages 16 and older)

The Color Purple is a series of letters written by a southern black woman (Celie), reflecting a history of oppression and abuse suffered at the hands of men. The novel charts Celie's resistance to the oppression surrounding her, and the liberation of her existence through positive and supportive relationships with other women. Pulitzer Prize and the American Book Award winner.

— Sources: *Free Resources - Black History - Biographies; Character Education; Times Herald-Record*



Raising Sensitivity

Students become more compassionate and empathetic when teachers focus on the feelings of others when correcting misbehavior. By using the acronym CARE, teachers can help children learn and thereby turn their insensitive moments into teaching tools that will help them be more aware of the feelings and needs of others.

C - Call attention to the insensitive, uncaring behavior.

A - Ask, "How would you feel?"

R - Recognize the consequences of the behavior.

E - Express and explain your disapproval of the insensitive action.

— Borba, Michelle, Ed.D., *Building Emotional Intelligence*, p. 41

Suggested Reading List

Books about Compassion

Kindergarten:

Dogger by Shirley Hughes

Great-Uncle Albert Forgets by Ben Schecher

First Grade:

The Queen's Necklace: a Swedish Folktale by Jane Langton

Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters by John Steptoe

The Selfish Giant by Oscar Wilde

Thy Friend, Obadiah by Brinton Turkle

Second Grade:

The Gift by Aliana Broadmann

The Happy Prince and Other Tales by Oscar Wilde

Everyone Knows What a Dragon Looks Like by Jay Williams

The Hundred Dresses by Eleanor Estes

Third Grade:

The Little Match Girl by Hans Christian Andersen

Clancy's Coat by Eve Bunting

The Sailor Who Captured the Sea and Other Celtic Stories by Deborah Lattimore

Charlotte's Web by E.B. White

Fourth Grade:

The Little Princess by Francis Hodgson Burnett

The Story of Ruby Bridges by Robert Coles

The House of Sixty Fathers by Meinder DeJong

The Giant by Morcai Gerstein

The Legend of King Arthur by Robert Lister

Fifth and Sixth Grade:

Sounder by William Armstrong

The Summer of Swans by Betsy Byars

Walk Two Moons by Sharon Creech

The Whipping Boy by Sid Fleischman

"The Gift of the Magi" by O. Henry

The Witch of Blackbird Pond by Emily Speare

Tiktala by Margaret Shaw-MacKinnon

Seventh and Eighth Grade:

Crazy Lady! by Jane Leslie Conly

The Secret Garden by Frances H. Burnett

Phoenix Rising by Karen Hesse

High School:

Wuthering Heights by Emily Bronte

A Tale of Two Cities by Charles Dickens

Hope Leslie by Catharine Maria Sedgwick

Show Real Love and Compassion on Valentine's Day!

Valentine's Day is a great opportunity to teach kids that expressions of love and friendship are extra special when they are gifts of kindness, time, respect, compassion and thoughtfulness. When expressed throughout the year, these gestures show others that "I love you" means more than a candy heart or three words on a card. Perform acts of compassion during the week of February 14th, then continue all year. Some ideas are:

- ◇ Volunteer for the afternoon at a local humane society, homeless shelter or food bank.
- ◇ Look for three opportunities to show compassion to another person during the week.
- ◇ Organize a program for the needy such as a food or clothing drive.
- ◇ Think about how it feels to be an only child, the oldest, middle or youngest child in the birth order. Identify the advantages and/or disadvantages of each. Discuss your feelings with your family.
- ◇ Hold a garage sale and donate all proceeds to a charitable organization.
- ◇ Show respect for all living things. Collect harmless insects that get into the house and release them outside. Avoid purposely stepping on insects. Pick only the number of flowers that you need.
- ◇ Be a peacemaker when friends have a conflict. Remember that we all make mistakes.
- ◇ When watching television share your feelings if saddened by something on the news. Identify actions that show understanding and respect for the feelings of others, or the lack of it.

Irena Sendler—Compassionate War Heroine

During WWII, Irena Sendler was an administrator at the Warsaw Social Work Department. Irena and her network of 24 brave social workers smuggled Jewish children out of the Warsaw Ghetto, one of the largest ghettos of Jews established by the Nazis. There were many escape routes used to smuggle the children out of the ghetto, and these smuggled children were then adopted by non-Jewish families with the understanding that the children would be returned to their rightful parents at the end of the war. While most children smuggled out of the ghetto were not infants, there is one account that an infant was smuggled out in the bottom of the tool box Irena carried. Overall, Irena managed to smuggle out and save 2500 children. Irena kept a record of the names of all the children she smuggled out and kept them in a glass jar, buried under a tree in a friend's back yard. At one point, Irena was caught by the Nazi's, interrogated, beaten severely, and sentenced to death. However, on the eve of her execution, someone in her network bribed a guard to allow her to escape. She lived in hiding until the end of the war. After the war, she dug up the jar of names, tried to locate any parents that may have survived, and attempted to reunite families. Unfortunately, most of the parents had died at the hands of the Nazis. However, Irena's brave and compassionate mission saved the thing these parents loved more than anything—their children.



eRumer—proved to be true. More information can be obtained by perusing irenasendler.com, a website devoted to Irena's life and the retelling of this story through a project called, "Life in a Jar."

A Lesson in Compassion from Zebras

Tell students that animals also have instinctive behaviors as it relates to sensitivity toward each other. Ask this question: What do you think zebras do when sick or injured zebras are unable to keep up with the herd; could they become easy prey?

Answer: The well zebras do not leave them behind. Instead they all slow down and they all stay together. This gives the ill or injured zebra a chance to recover in safety.

(2000 International Association of Character Cities, Achieving True Success: How to Build Character as a Family, p. 26)



Quotes About Compassion



Week 1

"Our task must be to free ourselves by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature and its beauty."
—*Albert Einstein*

"Compassion will cure more sins than condemnation."
—*Henry Ward Beecher*

"The purpose of human life is to serve and to show compassion and the will to help others."
—*Albert Schweitzer*

"Make no judgements when you have no compassion."
—*Anne McCaffrey*

"The value of compassion cannot be overemphasized. Anyone can criticize. It takes a true believer to be compassionate. No greater burden can be borne by an individual than to know no one cares or understand."
—*Arthur H. Stainback*

Week 2

"The monument of a great man is not of granite or marble or bronze. It consists of his goodness, his deeds, his love and his compassion."
—*Alfred Montapert*

"Through our willingness to help others we can learn to be happy rather than depressed."
—*Gerald Jampolsky*

"The whole idea of compassion is based on a keen awareness of the interdependence of all these living beings, which are all part of one another, and all involved in one another."
—*Thomas Merton*

"I feel the capacity to care is the thing which gives life its deepest significance."
—*Pablo Casais*

"If the world seems cold to you, kindle fires to warm it."
—*Lucy Larcom*

Week 3


"There are two ways of spreading light: to be the candle or the mirror that reflects it."
—*Edith Wharton*

"Real generosity is doing something nice for someone who will never find out."
—*Frank A. Clark*

"The greatest pleasure I know is to do a good action by stealth, and to have it found out by accident."
—*Charles Lamb*

"We should give as we would receive, cheerfully, quickly, and without hesitation; for there is no grace in a benefit that sticks to the fingers."
—*Seneca*

"The weak can never forgive. Forgiveness is the attribute of the strong."
—*Mahandas Gandhi*



Week 4

"One must care about a world one will never use."
—*Bertrand Russell*

"Compassion is the basis of morality."
—*Arthur Schopenhauer*

"Until he extends the circle of his compassion to all living things, man will not himself find peace."
—*Albert Schweitzer*

"Giving is the secret of a healthy life, not necessarily money, but whatever a person has of encouragement, sympathy and understanding."
—*John D. Rockefeller, Jr.*

"How far you go in life depends on your being tender with the young, compassionate with the aged, sympathetic with the striving and tolerant of the weak and strong. Because someday in life you will have been all of these."
—*George Washington Carver*

Black History Month Celebration

The celebration of Black History Month is a great opportunity to help students develop compassion, an appreciation of our nation's history, and writing and research skills.

Using the web sites below, have the students to work in groups and create a daily, "Today in Black History" cart of a calendar of daily events in black history. A calendar template can be printed and copied for each student. Explain to students that history happened each day of the year, not just one month. Have students write one event for each day.

Study and discuss the text of Dr. Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech. Allow students to write a few sentences or paragraph about their own dreams for the future, and then make a poster with images that show their dreams. Display and share the posters.

Websites:

- Today in Black History—http://www.africa.upenn.edu/K-12/Today_B_History.Html
- Black History Online—<http://www.blackfacts.com> (search of daily events)
- The Black Market.com—<http://www.theblackmarket.com/dates.html>

FCAT Writing Prompts

(use as writing prompts or discussion starters)

- Write about a time you wished you had shown compassion to another but didn't. What happened, how did you handle the situation, and what would you do differently now?
- Imagine that you are homeless. Write a first-person narrative describing how another person treated you with compassion.
- Write about a time someone showed compassion to you.
- Compassion is concern for the misfortune of another paired with the wish to help. What cause stirs compassion in you and how do you think you can help?
- There is an old saying, "Charity begins at home." What do you think this means?
- Do you think animals are capable of compassion? Write a persuasive argument for your beliefs.

Bulletin Board Ideas

- Use a picture of a globe with a header, "Improve Your World — Be Compassionate!"
- Show a picture of the class or use snapshots of individuals in the class. Use the header, "We Can Make A Difference in the World."
- Show photos of different animals and people including the elderly, babies, young children parents, teachers and students. Use the header, "Who Needs Compassion? We All Do!"
- Fill the bulletin board with the newspaper clippings that students bring to class. Add the header, "Watch for Opportunities to Be Compassionate."