

5 Steps to Cultivate Compassion When Immersed in Our Own Struggles

The struggle is real, so the saying goes...

Each of us are bound by our own distinct experiences. Each experience is fraught with strain and exertion on multiple levels. Physical. Emotional. Relational. Most are intertwined in a relentlessly complex knot of disorder.

Why? Because we live in a sinful world. Your struggles, my struggles, their struggles...they're all real. They're all felt deeply. They're also all worthy of compassion.

These days, it's easy to find messages that promote self-compassion when struggling. As a society, we have embraced the idea that self matters. Entire self-help markets whisk people away into inward focus with a promise of outward strength.

But what if there is another way?

Though I'm not disagreeing on self-compassion being important—it's something I've had to learn and continue to offer myself over the years too—I am aware of a more comprehensive and abundant source of kindness and consideration.

Compassion breeds healing when promoted beyond ourselves, even more so than when applied to ourselves.

Today, I want to shed light on how a broader connection with compassion can be nurtured and developed into profound health, wellness, and freedom. Freedom from what, you may ask? Freedom from baggage we needn't be carrying, that springs from uncompassionate responses to ourselves and others. Things like bitterness, unforgiveness, anxiety, and the many health-related issues that those nasty outlooks induce...heart strain, weight gain, insomnia...the list goes on and on.

I firmly believe that looking upward and outward—rather than extensively downward and inward—creates a beautiful impact for good, in and despite our own struggles.

Self-compassion has its role, but deeply rooted compassion for others is a far more powerful tool to wield in the battle of finding health, freedom, and meaningfulness in life.

I would like to propose five simple steps to achieve an attitude of compassion, which collectively inspires hope and fuels joy. Contagious, life-changing joy.

Feel it. Frame it. Friend it. Free it. Fund it.

Now say that three times fast...Just kidding...

Let's indulge the F words together...(Whoops! Stay with me, wink wink.)

FEEL IT

Let yourself feel all the emotion. Don't hold back! Feelings can be powerful tools to understand the deeper issue. And, yes, there is always a deeper issue below their surface.

Far too often, feelings terrify. We hand them a crown of honor and tremble under their authority in our lives. But feelings don't need to hold such power. They needn't be feared. Apprehend and appreciate them.

Feel it also applies to what others are experiencing. This is a similar concept to “walking in someone else's shoes.” It's stepping out of our existence momentarily and witnessing life from another's perspective.

With the understanding that we are all human—we all bleed the same—being willing to feel another person's experience is the first step toward truly embracing compassion and witnessing brighter days ahead.

FRAME IT

Frame it is the important next step. Important because feelings need to be felt, but then appropriately framed by conscious thought and understanding. This is where feelings lose their fear-filled status because logic reigns in their potential for havoc.

To frame our own feelings of struggle is to acknowledge them as being real then actively seek their root. It's also a valuable tool to realize that emotions don't last forever. They are a stepping stone in the garden of life.

Framing emotions felt on behalf of another person redirects our own internal dialogue of contempt or even pity, and plants reasonable reactions to situations that have previously appeared overwhelming.

FRIEND IT

Founded on the idea of love vs hate, when we befriend, we are holding hands rather than striking blows. We are declaring that we are for and not against.

Friending ourselves is a key component of overall health, and so too is friending our neighbour. Once we've felt another's emotions and better understand why they are as they are, it's important to establish a peaceful exchange. This isn't to say that what a person is doing or has done is right and acceptable, but it is saying that *as a person* we understand and can bless them rather than curse them.

The freedom found in *friending* is vital. It's life or death for ourselves and others.

Hate and bitterness are toxic, but forgiveness and love are freeing.

FREE IT

This leads to the next F word, which is a release of ownership and entitlement. All the felt emotion, all the frustration and heartache, and all the impulsivity and reactivity do not need to be clung to. They aren't what we're meant to embrace.

Freeing it, letting it go, frees *us*—to engage with charity, love, and blessing without residual, taxing weight.

FUND IT

Here is where the overflow of practical tenderness flourishes. In freedom, we can finally, fully embrace compassion through outward-focused attention to the needs of others. We can offer grace from a heart-felt perspective, rooted in discerned love. Growth happens—marvellously contagious, flourishing growth—when we've consciously invested in outward expressions of emotion. Despite ourselves. Despite our struggles.

Feel it, Frame it, Friend it, Free it, Fund it...

Five F-words that cultivate compassion beyond *self* while simultaneously bubbling up joy from within.

To struggle is human. To overcome through cultivated compassion is exemplary. And it's not as far-fetched as commonly believed.

Choosing to walk out these five focused steps is choosing a blessed life beyond the struggle. It ushers us into hope beyond the widespread despair, and meaning beyond the fury of questionable frustrations that abound.

Compassion is possible. It's vital.

Let's walk it out—into a healthy, joy-filled life!