

Expressions of Compassion

By Patti Teel
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Compassion is the universal language. We can see it being expressed in every corner of the world—in a mother's tears for her injured child, in an embrace, or in a loving gaze. Compassion and the need to give and receive love are inborn qualities which we need to preserve and nurture for the well being and survival of our beautiful planet.

One of the first ways that we can nurture compassion in our children is to help them to become aware of their own feelings and to be understanding and compassionate towards themselves. As they become aware of their own feelings, they will come to understand the importance of treating others as they themselves want to be treated. Eventually, this understanding and love can develop into a deep, unselfish appreciation and caring for the well-being of all people and for every living being in the universe.

Compassion is caring—and it can take many forms. Sometimes it involves taking action and other times not. There are times when compassion is best expressed by simply listening or by sending loving thoughts and prayers. When you want to decide whether taking action is the most compassionate course, examine your own motives and ask yourself whether it will keep the person from growing, learning, or taking responsibility for himself.

Without judgment or blame, a compassionate heart understands that people oftentimes choose or encounter difficult circumstances in order to learn important lessons. This can be a difficult task for parents. We love our children so very much that we hate to see them suffer. But when our 'help' overrides the natural consequences that they would have faced, it may cause them to become overly reliant on us. This can inadvertently cause them undo suffering as they continue to repeat the behavior that caused their distress. With only the best of intentions, our interference can actually end up being the antithesis of compassionate action.

Becoming a messenger of compassion:

Express yourself freely and compassionately. Laugh and cry without fear of appearing vulnerable. Get in the habit of telling your children how you feel and encourage them to do the same. As children describe how they're feeling, they will become more aware of their emotions. Even young children who cannot name the emotion they are feeling will be able to tell us if they feel good or bad. Empathize with their feelings, even if you don't agree with their actions. Eventually, this will help them to develop empathy as they grow to understand how others feel.

Give thanks and encourage expressions of gratitude for the every day joys and blessings in your life. Compassion and appreciation go hand and hand; when we care deeply about something or someone, we are grateful. For example, when we love and respect Mother Earth, we appreciate and care for her. And when we care for and have respect for people, we appreciate them as well.

Watch for the hidden gifts or lessons in every situation, even when it presents itself as a problem or a setback. The things that cause the greatest difficulties often produce the most profound lessons. Help your children to see beyond external circumstances to recognize the underlying message or lesson.

Let others determine their own fate without thinking that you know what is best for them. Compassion may involve allowing a person to grow and develop self-reliance by facing and solving their own problems.

TIME OUT WITH PATTI TEEL

DREAM THE DREAM AND STEP INTO IT

Find a way to express your compassion every day. Love and care for your neighbors and remember that today, in our interconnected world, we're all neighbors. Whether you're sharing your pocketbook, your time, your baking, your talent or simply a smile, find a way to express your compassion and love. Recruit your children to assist you in your efforts to be a messenger of compassion and it will become a way of

Dubbed "The Dream Maker" by People magazine, Patti Teel is a former teacher and the creator of an award winning relaxation audio series for children. Her book, *The Floppy Sleep Game*, gives parents techniques to help their children relax, deal with stress and fall asleep. She is a popular speaker and presents innovative workshops for parents, children, and health professionals. Get R&R tips and sign up for her newsletter at www.pattiteel.com. You can listen to her online radio show at www.timeoutwithpattiteel.com.