

Week 5

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How to be Grateful in these challenging times and increasing compassion

Compassion- Literally the word compassion means to suffer together. Emotional researchers define compassion as the feeling that arises when you are confronted with another persons suffering and feeling motivated to relieve that suffering.

*Researchers feel that compassion is a natural instinct, an otherwise automatic response. It can be found in very young children and hints of it can even be found in animals.

*Research tells us that connecting with others in a meaningful way (i.e. feeling compassion for others) helps us enjoy better physical and mental health.

*Perhaps one of the reasons why people are struggling with this new normal and are attempting different ways to stay connected, not just for social reasons but because we are programmed/born to be compassionate and connected to others.

*People who are compassionate feel more connected to others and feel less stress and anxiety.

*Researchers have found that children as young as 2 years old show compassion. They show increases in happiness (i.e. compassion towards others) when they were giving treats to others as apposed to receiving the treats themselves.

Compassion can be learned: Some strategies for teaching compassion

1. Start when children are young, but remember that children show compassion in different ways.

2. Have a child do something nice for someone else without getting or expecting anything in return.
3. Have child say something nice to someone cheer on another person.
4. Have child help someone.
5. Have child play a cooperative game where there is no winner. The goal of the game is to work together.
6. Have older child help younger sibling without receiving anything in return.
7. Develop with child an act of kindness jar. They can either put things in the jar that they are thankful for or take something out of the jar with a positive task for the child to do.
8. Have your child write letters to others perhaps an elderly person.
9. Read books with your child with themes of compassion.
10. Point to compassionate behavior in your child when you observe it.
11. Let your child you know they are allowed to make mistakes and they can learn from those mistakes.
12. Model, model, model compassionate behaviors.
13. Describe to the child how their behavior affects others.
14. Coach child to pay attention to facial expressions, describe what those facial expressions mean.
15. Have the child work with or care for another living creature.

Parents should avoid labeling children in the family this can promote sibling rivalry.

Be sensitive to the child's developmental stage/abilities.

Be a role model for your child.

Provide open/concrete affection to the child