

# Relationships- compassion

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*You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view...until you climb into his skin and walk around in it.* —Atticus Finch in *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

The fifth quality or value in the Relationship Quotient (**RQ**) is compassion.

Compassion involves showing care for other people by understanding their feelings, emotional state and situations. Compassion relates to empathy, emotional intelligence and to altruism. It is the form altruistic love takes when other people are suffering.

Compassion connects us to others. It is the wellspring for empathy, respect and caring. Compassion is a deep form of gratitude.

Compassion is natural and defines what it is to be human. We all possess mirror neurons that give us an empathic understanding of the feelings and actions of other people. This is something we are born with. It is innate.

Compassionate people are not those who lack flaws, the brave are not those who feel no fear and the generous are not those who never feel selfish. Extraordinary people are not extraordinary because they do not possess flaws. They are extraordinary because they choose to be self-aware and create a better world.

Human nature is not to seek independence—to become an island to oneself – but, rather, to seek companionship, affection and intimacy. The old belief that equates self-development and self-consciousness with

increasing autonomy has not been found to be true. None of us are truly independent. We are inter-dependent. We rely on others and we are born to be in relationships.

Compassion and empathy link us and bond us with others. Humans are keen to connect, connect and share. Our most feared punishment is solitary confinement. Social media flourishes mainly because enables connecting and sharing with other people.

Empathy is the psychological means by which we become part of other people's lives and share meaningful experiences. It creates meaning and purpose in our lives.

Love is fuelled by compassion. It is the capacity to value others as well as ourselves. Relationships are constructed on the contribution we can make to the other, not on what advantage we can gain from the other.

To be filled with compassion is to look beyond ourselves, to enjoy shared possibilities and to discover what creates pain and to try to remedy it.

## **Altruism**

***"None are less visible than those we choose not to see"*** Stadtler Lewis

Altruism is the supreme human quality that reminds us to think of others, recognising how our thoughts and actions may affect the well being of others. Altruism is unselfish joy we feel when we focus our actions on the well-being of others. Altruism encompasses all positive human values and acts as a useful check on our actions towards others.

Sustainable and successful cultures in schools, organisations, families and countries depend on the development of altruistic love. Consciously developing our inner senses of peace, honesty, trust, forgiveness, integrity, hope and compassion help us to behave towards people in ways in which we would like to be treated.

This compassionate approach to living is now underpinning the more advanced thinking in relation to leadership in life and in business. In successful schools, organisations and families, everyone's relationships improve.

### **Compassion and Forgiveness**

***'Tread softly because you tread on my dreams.'*** W.B. Yeats.

Altruism is to see the best in others and to act accordingly.

To develop compassion we have to forgive ourselves. Perfection is just not human. Mistakes and failures are necessary parts of the human experience. We have to learn to accept this in ourselves and in others.

When we forgive ourselves, we free ourselves from being controlled by the mistakes or misjudgements we have made. This is self-compassion.

This self-acceptance is a critically important form of "self-mending". It repairs self-regard; restores trust in yourself and this sense of trust, sponsors a more positive and fulfilling path to personal growth. It allows us to be authentic people who can make a powerful contribution to our relationships.

Being authentic increases resilience. When we become more resilient we impact more positively on the people in our lives.

Hopefulness replaces helplessness. Trust replaces fear. Connection is more prominent than judgment. Caring overrides divisions. Forgiveness and compassion allow us to heal, grow and flourish. This is self-constructive not self-destructive. This is empowering.

We all need to forgive and need to acknowledge our mistakes to ourselves, "I just got it wrong".

By accepting the flaws in ourselves we are empowered to be compassionate towards the flaws in others.

The healing of our relationships starts with forgiving ourselves for our mistakes. We can then forgive flaws in others. Doing this allows us to judge less and connect more.

Once we focus more powerfully on connecting with others we can then act with integrity to build hope and to give altruistically so that we can all live our lives in better relationships.

Compassion is contagious. There is a ripple effect in all of our lives: quality relationships create more quality relationships. Bringing together the five elements of the Relationship Quotient (**RQ**)- trust, forgiveness, integrity, hope and compassion- increases our capacity to create positive changes in our world. This in turn unlocks those capacities in the people around us.

Self-compassion when combined with altruism builds a generosity of spirit. When this is truly present in us it has the same effect on our relationships that springtime has on daffodils. And it creates peace and harmony in the world.