

**FOCUS WORD 7: be compassionate**

**INTRODUCTION**

**POSSIBLE ACTIVITIES**

**A project for charity such as a can pile (?)**

**Blindfold activity**

**Muting a dvd-poems related to deafness?**

**POSSIBLE RESOURCES**

**The Shah**

**Refugee Stories/poetry**

**Opening of Slumdog Millionaire/City of God/The Constant Gardener**

**Concept of Standing in Someone Else's Shoes**

**JOURNAL WRITING**

## Curious Questions

### Purpose

To build your compassion for others by practicing being curious.

### Prep Steps

- None.

### Alternatives

- 1 Use the instructions to have a conversation addressing a specific relationship.
- R Modify the format to be a partner share or an individual writing assignment.

## ACTIVITY

## Instructions

### ●●OPENING●●

- 1 Share purpose.** We are often so caught up in our own thoughts and concerns that we don't take the time to consider what is going on with other people. Today we'll explore how to be more curious about others, which generates compassion.
- 2 Discover struggles.** Go around the circle and share. What do you think is difficult in life for:
  - ... your parents or caregivers? [Pause between prompts to allow time to share. You may have to repeat questions for first few participants. Alternatively, write and display questions.]
  - ... your teachers (or employer)?
  - ... your peers?
- 3 Think of role models.** Think of someone who is a great example of a compassionate leader. Share with our circle:
  - What makes this person stand out as a role model?
  - What are the ways he or she shows compassion that you admire?
- 4 Get curious.** Think of a person in your life to whom you'd like to show more compassion.
  - What has been hard for him/her?
  - What is he/she really good at?
  - What is one thing he/she might be struggling with right now?
  - What matters most to him/her in life?
- 5 Commit.** Keeping in mind this person's gifts as well as his/her possible struggles, complete this sentence:
  - One way I can show (fill in the blank) more compassion is to ...
- 6 Debrief.** One way to show others compassion—and to not put them on the defensive—is to ask questions starting with "what." Before we meet again, get curious and ask those you're struggling with or judging questions like: What is happening in your life? Or: What are ways I could support you? Now let's try it. Go around the circle and share: What have you learned about compassion today?

### ●●CLOSING●●

## Discussion Questions

Here are some additional discussion questions you can use with a **R** or **1** to explore and practice Be Compassionate:

- What are the best ways to show someone you care about him or her?
- What is the kindest thing a friend has ever done for you?
- What are ways you need to be more compassionate with yourself?
- When have you needed compassion and not gotten it? What was the impact?
- What is the most generous help you have ever received in life?
- What is the difference between being compassionate and feeling sorry for someone?
- Do you think it is more important to have self-respect or to respect others? Why?
- Who in your life practices being compassionate toward others? How do they do it?
- Are there people or situations that you cannot be compassionate towards? Why?
- What makes you judge people versus get curious about them?
- Based on what we discussed, what's one way you are going to practice Be Compassionate?

**TIP!** See card #64 for additional engaging discussion questions.



ACTIVITY

## Be Compassionate

During a **R** or **1** session, you can assign a variety of journal prompts to explore this Respect Basic in writing. You can also combine the exercises of writing, speaking and listening by adding a partner sharing component or engaging the entire circle in a discussion about the journaling topic.

Journaling Topic	Prompts
<b>My feelings.</b> Today we'll explore and have compassion for our feelings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I feel sad when ...</li> <li>• I feel safe when ...</li> <li>• I feel lonely when ...</li> <li>• I feel diminished when ...</li> </ul>
<b>Role models.</b> Today we'll discover examples of compassion we can follow	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One person I admire for his/her compassion is ...</li> <li>• I follow his/her example and practice compassion by ...</li> <li>• I can increase my compassion by ...</li> </ul>
<b>Practicing compassion.</b> Today's focus is finding compassion even in difficult situations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One situation where I felt left out was when ...</li> <li>• I handled the situation by ...</li> <li>• To handle it respectfully I could have ...</li> </ul>
<b>Expanding compassion.</b> Today's focus is finding ways to increase our compassion.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I wish I could understand why people ...</li> <li>• I struggle to feel compassion for the following person ...</li> <li>• I am willing to be more compassionate toward him/her by ...</li> </ul>

**TIP!** See card #48 for additional engaging journaling questions.

JOURNAL

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**Purpose:** To learn about one another and connect around commonalities.

### Partner Activity: Our Commonalities

**1. Introduce the activity.** [Put participants into pairs.] Take one to two minutes to ask questions of each other to find out how many things you have in common that:

- you didn't already know, and
- are not visible.

**2. Share.** Here are some examples of commonalities that meet the criteria: I might say my favorite food is pizza. What's yours? Or I might ask, What city were you born in? I wouldn't tell my partner that I have brown hair because he or she can see that. [Give participants time to share with each other.]

**3. Debrief.** Get into a circle, standing next to your partner. One by one, share one thing you have in common with your partner. If others in the group also share that commonality, put your hand in the air, lunge forward, and yell "Me too!" [The process continues until all pairs have shared.]

**4. Additional rounds.** Switch partners and do a round of finding out what you have in common around ... [a specific topic (sports, school, and so on)].

**Note:** To help participants with their nonverbal skills, consider having them do a round where they can't speak and can only act out ideas.

**5. Debrief.** What did you learn about someone that surprised you? What did you get out of that game?

### Group Activity: If You Could ...

**1. Create questions.** [Create a bag or basket full of questions like the following:

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