

COUNSELING CORNER

Monthly school newsletter from Lutheran Counseling Services

Word of the Month: Compassion

Resource Highlight:



Purchasing a book through our link supports expansion of our school counseling program. Thank you!

Consider the following books highlighting compassion:

Bear Feels Sick helps preschool - 2nd graders to feel compassion alongside characters in the book.

For grades 3 - 6, the classic book **The Hundred Dresses** builds compassion in the reader for the girl who says she has 100 dresses at home.

For teachers or kids in grades 4 - 7, **Hot Issues, Cool Choices: Facing Bullies, Peer Pressure, Popularity, and Put-Downs** by clinical psychologist Sandra McLeod Humphrey, gives scenarios followed by processing questions on how to make cool choices.

The literal translation of compassion is to "suffer together". To build on this, the Greater Good Science Center defines it as "the feeling that arises when you are confronted with another's suffering and feel motivated to relieve that suffering". Why would we want to build a character trait related to suffering?

The Bible calls Christians to build this trait in Colossians 3:12 - *Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.* The Dalai Lama shares "If you want to be happy, practice compassion." Modern science also boasts its benefits from rewiring a brain toward empathy and understanding, lowering stress responses, slowing heart rates, and boosting the feel good hormone oxytocin.

For parents and adults who work with children, this trait is of immense importance. And not only for the benefit of the children in our care, but for ourselves as well. Consider how to have compassion for the children in your life. What would it be like to connect to their feelings of suffering and feel motivated to relieve it? How would you feel as a parent or teacher if you first connected to the feelings behind a child's behavior, and used that to guide



Car Conversations



Whether in the car, store line, or at the dinner table, here are some ideas to build this trait in your child.

- Create a compassion jar and whenever someone in the family is "caught" showing compassion, money goes into the jar. After some time, the money is used to relieve someone's suffering.
- As a family, build compassion with a service project. Find a way to serve others in your community and talk about how you connected to the others' suffering and were motivated to help by serving. Can you relate to their challenges? Connect to your own challenges.
- Allow each family member to discuss when it is hardest to have compassion. When is it easiest? Have each family member pick a target area for compassion: Ex: Recess, social media, traffic, news stories, etc. Report back about instances of showing compassion. Remember to keep compassion in the conversation and connect with what it feels like to be successful or not in this task.



your response? If you were connected to others around the world through your compassion for their experiences, would that help you live your life differently? Better? More relaxed? With greater perspective?

So how do you build this trait? In your children and in yourself? It can be helpful to approach others with a sense of curiosity, warmth and caring, rather than judgement. Use Jesus as a model for this. Approach yourself with this mindset as well!

Research shows that the brain can be trained in building compassion with short daily practice. Taking the results of this research, we can begin by offering compassion toward ourselves and then directing it towards those close to us, such as family and friends. We can branch out and practice extending this focus on compassion to acquaintances or others we come in contact with throughout the day. We can then stretch to extend this feeling of compassion to those around the world or even to someone we are in conflict with.

A compassion meditation can be a way to build this skill and focus. Find a link to a compassion meditation and the research that was mentioned above **here**. This meditation is geared toward adults in vocabulary and length, but consider completing a child-focused compassion meditation practice along with your child, such as **this one**.

Look for ways to connect to suffering and connect to your own motivation to relieve that suffering. Remember to include compassion for yourself as well! Find ways to extend compassion to others today as you move through your day. How will you show compassion to yourself and others today?

COUNSELOR CONNECTION

A counselor is at your school weekly to help build this and other mental health traits in your child. Reach out to your school to contact your school counselor or contact us at LCS at (407) 644-4692 or lcsfl.com.

MISS A MONTH?

Find previous [newsletters here](#).



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Services**

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