

Compassionate Communication in Group Work

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Topics

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02

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groups

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01 What is compassion?



What is the emotion aroused in you...

What do you want to do about it...

How would you feel if you do that...

How may your action mean to the being...

What is compassion...

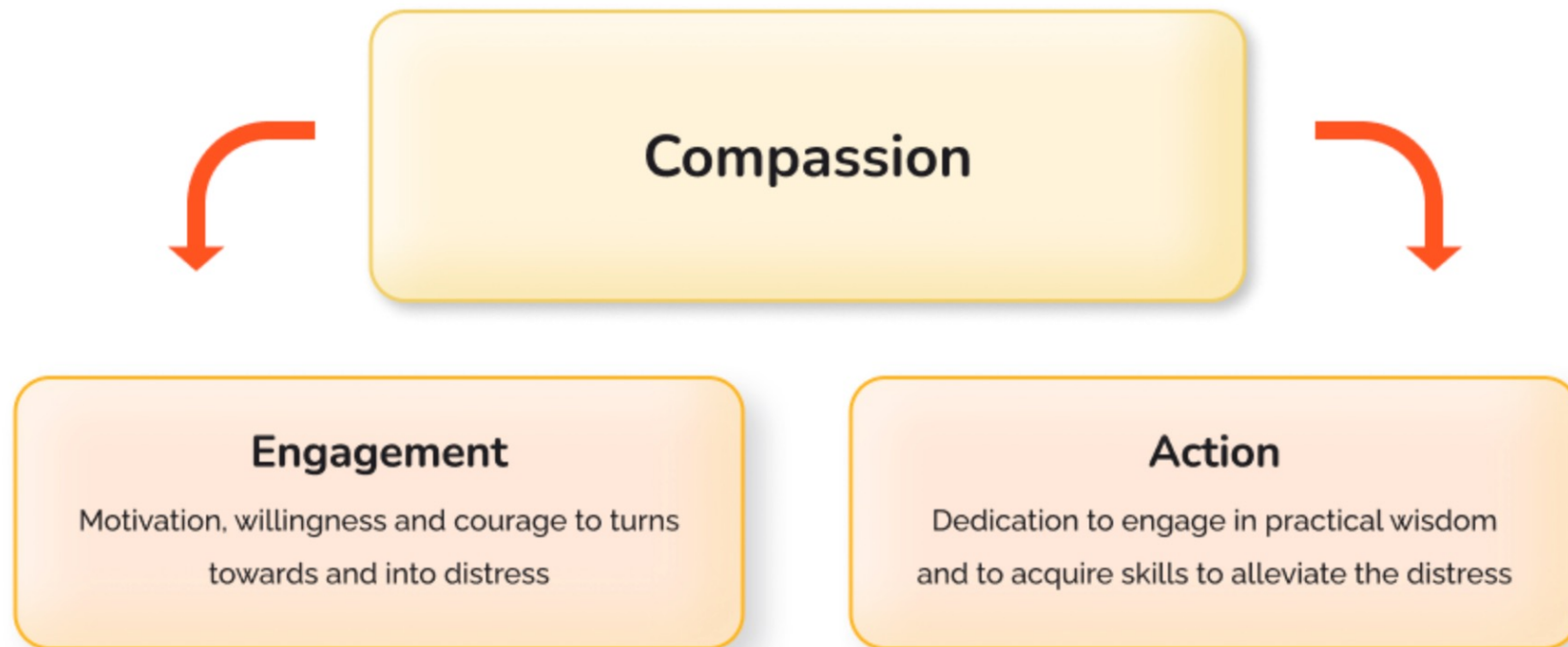
- Latin word *compati*, meaning “to suffer with”
- ‘Real compassion comes from seeing the other's suffering. You feel a sense of responsibility, and you want to do something for him or her’ (The Dalai Lama, 1966).
- ‘the feeling that arises in witnessing another’s suffering and that motivates a subsequent desire to help...’ (Goetz et al., 2010).
- ‘a multidimensional process that involves: “(1) an awareness of suffering (cognitive component), (2) a tender and care concern related to being emotionally moved by suffering (affective component), (3) a wish to see the relief of that suffering (intentional component), and (4) a responsiveness or readiness to help relieve that suffering (motivational).’ (Jinpa, 2010)

How do we define compassion?

In the current context, compassion is defined and understood as:

- A motivation that orientates to “...a sensitivity to suffering in self and others with a commitment to try to alleviate and prevent it” (Gilbert & Choden, 2013, p.94; Gilbert, 2017, p.2)
- An integrated flow that involves compassion to others, others to self and self to self (Gilbert, 2019) .

Dual psychologies of compassion



(Ref.: Gilbert, 2019)

Discuss

Sympathy / Empathy / Compassion
How do they differ?

Sympathy, Empathy, Compassion: How do they differ?

- **Sympathy:** offer a pity-based response but lack of genuine understanding of the person's feelings and needs.
- **Empathy:** step into the person's shoes, to feel and to understand; make the person feels understood.
- **Compassion:** feel how the person feels, seek to understand their needs and take action to help; not afraid to engage in distress and to do things to relieve the person's suffering.

Video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XXb2awAbmUA>



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02 Compassion and well-being

Compassion and wellbeing

- Compassion is cross cultural (Goetz et al, 2010). It reduces feelings of threat to self or others, and thus is **associated with reduction in stress levels** (Page-Gould et al, 2008).
- Compassion **increases social connection** (Seppala et al., 2013) and **facilitates safeness** (Gilbert et al., 2004; Page-Gould et al., 2008; Cozolino, 2013).
- It is found to **facilitate connection, care and improved social functioning** (Kim, Cunnington, & Kirby, 2020).

Compassion in education

- Embedding compassion in higher education **effects on emotional well-being and inclusivity** (Gibbs, 2017, Maratos et al., 2019, and Harvey et al., 2020).
- Compassion-based initiatives (Maratos et al., 2022) show **potential for greater psychological well-being for students and staff.**
- Compassionate Mind Training (CMT) and compassionate micro skills of communication could **reduce self-critical judgment** among student psychotherapists (Beaumont et al., 2017).
- Compassionate communicative behaviours **enhance group work and cohesion** among university students (Gilbert, T., 2017).



03 Experience in group work

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Reflection: How has been your experience in group work?

- What do you think about group work / group project?
- How do you feel about working with other fellow students in a group?
- What do you think are the most common problems you have experienced when working in groups?

Experience in group work...

- Things do not always go smooth
- It can be challenging to address diversity and competition
- More outcome and task-oriented rather than teamwork and people-oriented
- Expression of compassion, kindness or support?

Reflection: An experience in group work

1. Could you recall an experience that **you have faced a difficulty in group work and someone in the group noticed and offered their support to you?**
 - What was that experience?
 - How did it feel like for you?
 - How might having this group member's support mean to you?
2. Could you recall an experience that **you have observed a group member facing a difficulty in group work and initiated your support to them?**
 - What was that experience?
 - What motivated you to initiate your support and how did it feel like for you?
 - How might your support mean to the group member?

**Compassion is not the responsibility
of a single individual. It's the
responsibility of everyone in the
group and the
learning community.**



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04 Compassionate communication in groups

The importance of group work

Group work could:

- Enhance the quality of learning for students through collaboration with peers.
- Develop a sense of responsibility for some students. As they are part of the group, they would not want to disappoint their group members.
- Enhance students' motivation to contribute their efforts to the project.
- Helps students develop generic skills like teamwork, communication, and project management skills while engaging in the group process. **These skills are valued by many employers and beneficial to students' future in long term.**

Source of reference: <https://ar.talic.hku.hk/group.htm#2>

Compassion in group work

• **The focus groups with counselling students at The University of Hong Kong found that compassion in group work could:**

- Safeguard mental wellbeing of students
- Enhance learning motivation and bonding among students
- Help students regulate their emotions and facilitate collaboration with others

Brainstorm...the facilitative and non-facilitative attitude and behaviours of communication in groups

- Facilitative

- Non-facilitative

Some examples

- Facilitative

- Demonstrating openness
- Holding a non-judgmental stance
- Listening and responding to difficulties
- Encouraging every member to express themselves
- Setting goal on group accomplishment
- ...

- Non-facilitative

- Discriminating against differences
- Holding pre-assumption
- Lacking engagement / staying silent
- Dominating / not listening
- Setting goal on personal accomplishment
- ...

**Do these attitude and behaviours
of communication in group sound
familiar to you?**

Lacking engagement / staying silent

Can you think of some reasons that
people do not engage in group
communication?

Or are unwilling to speak up?

Lacking engagement / staying silent



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“Dominant” behaviours

Can you think of some reasons that people tend to dominate in group communication?
Or are unwilling to listen to others?

“Dominant” behaviours



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Collective wisdom

How could we **attend and respond to**
these non-facilitative behaviours in
group communication with compassion?

Compassionate communication requires...**MATA**



Conclusion

Wisdom, compassion, and courage are the three universally recognized moral qualities of men. - Confucius



Photo: Jessica Tang



05 Self-reflection

Photo: <https://unsplash.com/photos>

Self-reported survey

- Am I compassionate to self / others?
- How's my well-being?
- How's my relationship with peers in the group?

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Thank you!



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