

In an angry America, a new cure emerges: compassion

By Washington Post, adapted by Newsela staff on 02.18.20

Word Count **416**

Level **400L**



Image 1. "We're not survivors of the fittest, we're survivors of the nurtured," Louis Cozolino, a relationship psychologist once said. The findings of a study in 2017 concluded that connection and relationships were the best indicators of a long life. Photo: Annie Spratt/Unsplash

Susan O'Mara is a doctor. She runs an emergency department of a hospital. She knows how to give quick answers. Before, though, she did not consider compassion. Then she took a special training that changed her thinking.

The training taught the doctor to stop and listen. It helped her focus. She also found more sympathy.

"Compassion" means noticing suffering. It is about wanting to help. Compassion could be good for health. Many also see it as a tool for a successful business.

People know that caring for others is good. The new compassion methods, though, come from research. Scientists studied the brain and body. They looked at how relationships affect our health.

People learn to practice compassion. They learn deep listening. They also practice deep breathing. Experts use teachings about how we are all connected.

Learning How To Be Compassionate

James Doty is a professor. He wrote a book about compassion. He also runs a compassion center. The center opened 12 years ago. Back then, it was the only one. Now Dr. Doty works with places across the world. "Millions of dollars are being given to support this research," he said. "Compassion is no longer a 'soft' science."

Jane Dutton is a professor. She studies compassion at work. The need for compassion, she said, is high. Social media is growing. Caring structures are falling apart.

People want to learn compassion. Tara Brach teaches mindfulness. She ran a 10-day online "compassion challenge." Nearly 100,000 people signed up.

Compassion is taught as a skill. It is different than empathy. Empathy is imagining someone's pain. Compassion means wanting to do something to stop pain.



Feeling More Aware

Joan Brown Campbell is a minister. She is also activist. She worries about "compassion" changing. It might become shallow.

"'Compassion' is a very hard word," she said. Some see compassion as "easy." "For many, 'compassion' seems not risky enough," she said.

Connection and relationships matter. A study of Harvard graduates came out in 2017. They were followed for 80 years. It found that connection and relationships were the best signs of a long life.

Dr. O'Mara decided to study compassion in her early 50s. She needed to help her patients and staff. She also needed something to keep her from "drowning in other people's difficulties." Her compassion training has helped. Now she feels more aware.

Quiz

1 What does the author of this article want to explain?

- (A) why compassion is better than mindfulness
- (B) why compassion can help businesses
- (C) why learning compassion is important
- (D) why learning compassion helps doctors

2 Read the paragraph below from the section "Learning How To Be Compassionate."

People want to learn compassion. Tara Brach teaches mindfulness. She ran a 10-day online "compassion challenge." Nearly 100,000 people signed up.

What does the author want to explain in this paragraph?

- (A) how compassion and empathy are different
- (B) how compassion is becoming more popular
- (C) how compassion is taught in many books
- (D) how compassion is hurt by social media

3 Which selection from the section "Feeling More Aware" supports the idea that compassion can help people to live longer?

- (A) Joan Brown Campbell is a minister. She is also an activist.
- (B) "'Compassion' is a very hard word," she said. Some see compassion as "easy."
- (C) It found that connection and relationships were the best signs of a long life.
- (D) Her compassion training has helped. Now she feels more aware.

4 Read the sentence below from introduction [paragraphs 1-5]

The training taught the doctor to stop and listen.

How does the sentence support the author's idea that compassion can help people?

- (A) It explains how compassion changed Susan O'Mara's thinking.
- (B) It shows that doctors are trained to help people.
- (C) It tells what scientists learned about compassion.
- (D) It describes how people need to be listened to.