

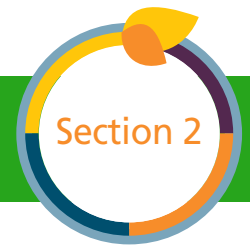
Parent & Caregiver




Circle Agenda

Circle Topic	CR Section 2: What Does It Look Like to Act with Compassion?
<p><b>Planning</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Send out electronic link to Kristin Neff’s <a href="#">Self-Compassion Scale</a> to participants</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Send out <a href="#">pre-read</a> for Section 2</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Type up Group Agreements from Session 1 and have printed for the center of the circle – either include group’s values at the bottom of this list or keep notecards to spread around the circle at future sessions</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Type up the group’s family goals and have printed for the center of the circle</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Prepare materials for Session 2</li> </ul>
<p><b>Purpose of Circle</b></p>	<p><b>Today you will:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Explore the Steps of Compassionate Action.</li> <li>2. Apply the Steps to situations.</li> <li>3. Address the need for safety while trying to be compassionate.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Time/Materials/Preparation</b></p>	<p><b>Time:</b> 90 minutes</p> <p><b>Materials:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Group agreements</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Group values and family goals – generated at first session</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Centerpiece</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Talking piece</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Fidgets</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Name tags</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Pens/markers</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Flipchart paper with compassion resilience definition</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Handouts: <a href="#">Compassionate Action Steps</a>, <a href="#">Emotional Regulation Plans</a>, <a href="#">Strategies for Keeping Calm</a>, <a href="#">“Just Like Me” cards</a></li> </ul>

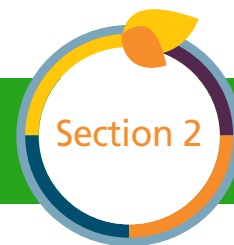
# Compassion in Action




Circle Topic	CR Section 2: What Does It Look Like to Act with Compassion?
<b>Time/Materials/ Preparation</b> <i>(continued)</i>	<b>Preparation:</b> Cut “Just Like Me” cards – handout has four to a page. Prepare scenarios if not using one provided, arrange chairs in a circle without furniture in the middle. Hang definition of compassion resilience on the wall.
<b>Opening and Check-in (15 minutes)</b>	<p><b>Share</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Welcome back! I invite everyone to get into a comfortable position with your eyes closed or looking towards the ground. We are going to take a moment to pause. Take a few slow breaths. <i>(Pause)</i> Name in your mind what you want to let go of to be present in this circle and your personal reason for being here. <i>(Pause for 10 seconds)</i> I invite you to bring your attention back to the circle.</li> </ul> <p><b>Share</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We will start our circle with an opening question for the group using the talking piece. As a reminder, when someone is sharing our only task is to listen to what they are sharing, and you always have the right to pass when the talking piece is passed to you. After you answer, please pass the talking piece to the person next to you.</li> </ul> <p><b>Ask</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(Go-around) Share your name and one way you saw your family values in action since we last met.</li> </ul> <p><b>Share</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>During our last time together, we discussed our values and group agreements – we have those posted here for us to reference throughout our group <i>(point out their location, either in the middle of the circle or on a wall nearby)</i>.</li> <li>Today we are going to discuss what compassion looks like in action, how that applies to our lives, and ways to regulate our and our children’s emotions.</li> </ul>
<b>Guiding Questions (15 minutes – Steps to Compassionate Action Explanation)</b>	<p><b>Share</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As we touched on in our first session, compassion is being aware of another’s suffering combined with a desire to help alleviate it. Today we will be looking at what compassion looks like when you move from desire to action.</li> </ul> <p>Distribute Steps to <a href="#">Compassionate Action Steps</a> handout.</p> <p><b>Share</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I am going to walk us through the Steps to Compassionate Action and include an example of how we may use it with one of our children. For the sake of this example, we’ll say the child is in 8th grade. After the walk-through, we will apply the steps to a scenario with another adult.</li> </ul>

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<p><b>Guiding Questions (15 minutes – Steps to Compassionate Action Explanation)</b> <i>continued</i></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Notice</b> – Be present in the moment so we can recognize signs of distress. This may seem like an obvious and simple step. In our fast-paced lives it is probable that we walk by pain all the time without recognizing it. Noticing requires that our minds be present and mindful of our environment and the people in it. We cannot be fully present for all the pain that potentially exists in our environment. Being present is a choice. We can decide to be focused on the here and now. And, sometimes, people around us rise up in such a way that we are brought into the present without our direct choice!</li> </ul> <p><b>Ask</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (Open mic) When is it hard for you to be present to notice your child’s pain? (<i>Notice</i>)</li> </ul> <p><b>Facilitator Tip:</b> <i>Examples may be: when I am stressed about things happening at work, when I am not feeling well physically or mentally, when my child is being disrespectful.</i></p> <p><b>Share</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As this step highlights, it is important for us to notice when we are not able to be fully present for the person we are talking with. In these instances, it may be appropriate to set a boundary, asking the individual to connect with us later so we can give them our best selves. When setting this boundary is not possible, we need to do our best to ground ourselves in the moment so we can be as present as possible.</li> <li>• Now, lets think about how this applies to our 8th grader. We’ve had a long, difficult day at work and are just returning home. Before opening the door, we take a few deep breaths. Within a minute of walking in, our 8th grader yells at us from the couch. They immediately ask about dinner and start telling us about a conflict they had with their teacher. How unfair that teacher treated them today. We can tell they didn’t have a good day either.</li> <li>• <b>Self-check</b> – Our second step is that of self-check. In this step, we work to be aware of our initial feelings and thoughts. Once we become aware of someone else’s distress, the compassionate next step is to turn inward! We do this to become aware of how our biases and past experiences are forming our first emotions and judgments related to the other person in that moment. Initial judgments are natural and, yet, often not accurate. This moment of turning inward allows us to set aside our initial ideas and emotions in order to gather helpful information.</li> <li>• Thinking back to our 8th grader, our initial thoughts may be, <i>here we go again...you are always having problems with your teachers...if only you did as they asked, you wouldn’t have these problems...I really don’t like your teacher either... or...when I was in 8th grade I was much more respectful to my teachers...</i></li> <li>• We do our best to put these thoughts aside so we can engage in our next step.</li> </ul>

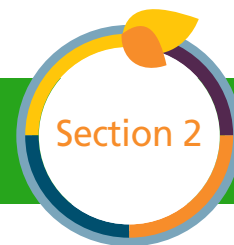
# Compassion in Action





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<p><b>Guiding Questions (15 minutes – Steps to Compassionate Action Explanation)</b> <i>continued</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Seek understanding</b> – Listen with curiosity to understand the other’s perspective. Once we have set aside our initial feelings and judgments, seek to understand what it might be like to experience the situation from the other person’s perspective. As we listen (rather than speak!), we try to remain in a place of curiosity. We do not need to feel agreement. Our goal is to gain some understanding of how they see and experience the distress, focusing our attention on their feelings and strengths.</li> <li>• Thinking back to our scenario, we ask our child, tell me more about what happened today? How did it feel to interact with your teacher? Our child tells us that they forgot to turn in an assignment yesterday and while the teacher has given extensions in the past, she’s not this time. Our child shares how unfair this feels and how much this is going to negatively impact their grade. We hear that our child cares about their grade, has completed the assignment and feels hurt that past practices have changed without their knowledge. They are scared about getting a poor grade and feeling sad and frustrated.</li> <li>• <b>Increase empathy</b> – When we are able to understand what it might feel like to stand in another’s shoes, we are experiencing empathy. We will never be able to completely understand what someone else is going through, since we all experience life differently, but we can connect to a time we felt the same feeling. Empathy leads to a growing desire and intention to help. Keep noticing and seeking understanding if empathy seems out of reach.</li> <li>• Just like our 8th grader, we can think of times we felt sad, frustrated, and hurt. We can most likely remember a time when an expectation changed without our awareness. Bringing this feeling to mind helps us remove judgments we may have about our child’s situation and helps us support them in our next step of compassionate action.</li> <li>• <b>Decide your next best action</b> – This step often requires us to go back to step number two – a self-check. Once we feel that we can relate to the other’s feeling, it may be second nature for us to jump to offering advice. The hard truth, for those of us who want to fix the world or just reduce our child’s suffering, is that our solutions very rarely are helpful to the other person. A better approach to compassionate action is to first offer support, not solutions or personal wisdom. We might ask, “How can I be helpful to you in this moment?” We can also ask, “What worked for you in the past when you experienced something like this?” If they seem out of solutions themselves and we want to share some advice, always ask permission first, “I have some ideas, would you like to hear them?”</li> <li>• For our child, we may say, I can see you care about your grade and it sounds like you have been in this position in the past. What do you think you could do tomorrow to help with this situation? And how can I best support you right now?</li> <li>• Though it may be hard at times to remember, our children certainly do have wisdom and can be supported to come to their own conclusions with what action is best for them to take next.</li> </ul>

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<p><b>Guiding Questions</b> (15 minutes – Steps to Compassionate Action Explanation) <i>continued</i></p> <p>(25 minutes – Application of Steps to Compassionate Action)</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Take action</b> – Do what we promise and do not promise what we cannot do. Once we have done the work of steps 1-5, we act on what we and the person have decided is the compassionate action that we CAN take and that the PERSON BELIEVES will be helpful to them.</li> <li>• Perhaps in the situation of our 8th grader, this looks like us helping them write a letter to their teacher or organizing a calendar to help them keep track of future assignments. However we choose to support, the most important thing is that we follow through on that promise.</li> <li>• Often times when we practice compassion with others, we’re more likely to get it in return, though more so the case with adults than children.</li> </ul> <p><b>Ask</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (Open mic) Next we’re going to apply the steps to a scenario with a friend. Before we begin, do you have any questions about the Steps to Compassionate Action?</li> </ul> <p>Read the following scenario or write your own scenarios to be more culturally relevant to the group. Be careful not to choose scenarios that are too complicated or controversial. You want ones that will clearly help the participants to get a good grasp on the steps.</p> <p><i>A friend tells you that she wants to ask her sister, who has no children, to take her children to raise them instead of her. She is sick of feeling like a failure when it comes to motherhood. She says that her kids treat her poorly and she finds herself treating them in ways her mother treated her. She says she thought she would be a better mom than her mom was. She says she hates parenting and wants relief. She looks really tired.</i></p> <p><b>Ask</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (Go-around) What emotions and initial judgments arise for you as I read the scenario? (<i>Self-check</i>)</li> <li>• (Open mic) Our next step is to seek to understand – what feelings do we think our friend is experiencing and what strengths do we hear in what they are sharing? (<i>Seek to understand</i>)</li> <li>• (Thumbs Up) After we seek to understand their feelings and strengths, we work to cultivate empathy. Can you give me a thumbs up if you have experienced feelings similar to what our friend in the scenario is experiencing? (<i>Cultivate empathy</i>)             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Remember us tapping into that feeling helps us suspend judgment and be alongside our friend to help them discern their best next steps.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• (Open mic) What strategies do you use to help you not become a “fixer” for the other person? How do you invite them to share what they need in the moment and connect to their wisdom? (<i>Discern best action</i>)</li> </ul> <p><b>Facilitator Tip:</b> Examples include, “How can I be helpful to you in this moment?,” “What worked for you in the past when you experienced something like this?”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (Pair share) Which step of compassionate action is typically easier for you and why do you think that might be? (<i>Take action</i>)</li> </ul>

# Compassion in Action



Circle Topic	CR Section 2: What Does It Look Like to Act with Compassion?
<p><b>Guiding Questions</b> (25 minutes – Application of Steps to Compassionate Action) <i>continued</i></p> <p>(15 minutes – Emotional Regulation Plans)</p> 	<p><b>Share</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In addition to supporting your family’s goals, there are two more benefits of acting with compassion.</li> <li>• When we focus on listening to understand, our youth learn to use their voice to communicate their feelings and experiences and learn from our modeling of respectful listening. These are skills they will use the rest of their lives.</li> <li>• Another benefit is when a child is approached with compassion, it helps to alleviate some of the pressure they may feel to never make mistakes or fall short of expectations.</li> </ul> <p><b>Share</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is very difficult to use the steps to compassionate action if we feel unsafe. When things begin to feel like they could become unsafe, we can be triggered into reacting instinctively to the perceived threat by fleeing, fighting, or freezing.</li> <li>• In those cases, our lower or “downstairs brain” is in control. The part of our brain that can rationalize, or our “upstairs brain,” cannot help us to decide about our best action.</li> </ul> <p><b>Ask</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (Go-around) What have you found to help you access your “upstairs brain” (to choose a rational response) in the midst of your “downstairs brain” being triggered (fight, flight, or freeze) by your child’s words or actions?</li> </ul> <p><b>Facilitator Tip:</b> <i>Examples include, taking a few deep breaths, walking away from my child before responding, saying some words of kindness to myself, such as this too will pass.</i></p> <p>Hand out the Emotional Regulation Plans for all three age groups and Strategies for Keeping Calm handouts.</p> <p><b>Share</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• These plans can help you and your children learn and practice noticing your “downstairs brain” triggers and using strategies to engage your “upstairs brain.” This takes lots of practice!</li> </ul> <p>Walk through one of the plans with the group.</p> <p><b>Ask</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (Open mic) What might be a good first step for you to get started working on these plans with your family in the next week</li> </ul>
<p><b>Check for understanding</b> (10 minutes)</p>	<p><b>Share</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Next time we get together we will take a deep look at compassion fatigue; what it is, how it starts and grows over time, and how to become more aware of it so we can avoid it taking too much of a toll on us. To get us thinking a bit about it in the context of the Steps to Compassionate Action:</li> </ul> <p><b>Act</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (Go-around) Which of the Steps to Compassionate Action sometimes actually adds to your feelings of frustration, overwhelm, or exhaustion?</li> </ul>

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<p><b>Self-care and Closing (15 minutes)</b></p> 	<p><b>“Just like Me” Exercise</b></p> <p><b>Share</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do this exercise to develop grace for one of your family members when it is hard to do so. Close your eyes or look towards the ground and recall a time when you have found one of your family members more challenging. Maintain your focus on this person as I read these statements.               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. “Just like me, this person is seeking happiness in their life.”</li> <li>2. “Just like me, this person is trying to avoid suffering in their life.”</li> <li>3. “Just like me, this person has known sadness, loneliness and despair.”</li> <li>4. “Just like me, this person is seeking to fill their needs.”</li> <li>5. “Just like me, this person is learning about life.”</li> </ol> </li> </ul> <p><b>Facilitator Tip:</b> After reading through the five steps one time, repeat the last part of each section – “is seeking happiness in their life, is trying to avoid suffering in their life, has known sadness, loneliness and despair, is seeking to fill their needs, and is learning about life” – then pause for five seconds before inviting participants to bring their attention back to the circle.</p> <p>Hand out the <a href="#">“Just Like Me”</a> handout to participants.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Try this five-step exercise when you are with someone and feelings of compassion seem out of reach. Do it discreetly and try to do all the steps with the same person. You can begin by simply bringing someone to mind. Eventually you can do this when you want to bring yourself out of a place of judgment in a tough interaction with another person. At the root of it all, we are all human beings who crave attention, recognition, affection, and above all, happiness.</li> </ul> <p><b>Ask</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (Go-around) For our closing today, I’d like to hear from everyone one more time, what is one thing that stood out to you today that you want to think more about between sessions?</li> </ul> <p><b>Share</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thank you for being here today. Our next meeting will be <i>(share next session date and time here)</i>.</li> <li>• Same as last time, the facilitation team will be sending out a pre-read before our next session. It will give you some additional context for what we will be covering at our next group. If you didn’t get a chance to read the pre-read for this week and would like to learn more about the topic we discussed today, take a few minutes to review it.</li> <li>• We look forward to seeing you next time.</li> </ul>