

Building Compassionate Communities Article

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We live in pretty challenging times where real communication between people has pretty much broken down leading to conflict, alienation, stereotyping, bigotry, hatred, violence (and the list of toxic attitudes and behaviors seems to grow daily). In the midst of this mess, more and more people are looking for healthy alternatives leading to mutual respect, openness, and collaboration around common core values of treating others with dignity and compassion. Every human being, at one level or another, is trying to figure life out. Building Compassionate Communities is critical if we are to counter the dysfunction of our current culture and empower people to “become better versions of themselves and more effective leaders in the spheres of influence.”

In 2022-2023 I wrote a series of books that I call “The Compassion Trilogy.” The purpose of these books is to facilitate “discovery learning” for training people to become:

- **Build Compassionate Communities:** *Building Compassionate Communities*
- **Compassionate Leaders:** *The Compassionate Leader*
- **Compassionate Listeners:** *The Compassionate Listener*

Assumptions About Compassionate Listening: I listed ten assumptions in *The Compassionate Listener* that have helped me formulate my paradigm and methodology for compassionate listening:

- People are valuable.
- People are complex.
- People tend to be formed by their social experiences.
- People need to be and desire to be loved and to love.
- People need a purpose greater than themselves to invest in in order to be healthy and functional.

- People can change if they are willing to take responsibility for their own growth and development.
- People resist change until they are convinced that change is necessary.
- People tend to be more open to change if they discover and own the necessary change themselves.
- People tend to experience more rapid and significant transformation if they are involved in healthy, intentional mentor-coaching relationships.
- People who can gain most from mentor-coaching tend to be relatively healthy and functional and are faithful and teachable.

Building Compassionate Communities: My exploration of compassionate listening and leadership has led me to a growing awareness of the need for individuals to belong and the importance of being part of healthy communities. This awareness has led me to attempt to define and describe the importance of compassion in our interactions with others and the need to build Compassionate Communities. The WHY or purpose of building Compassionate Communities is “to help others care for others in mutually beneficial ways that they need to be cared for.” This is my paraphrase of the Golden Rule or The Great Commandment (Matthew 22:34-40) that we love one another as we would like to be loved. This is accomplished through “The Five Cs of Compassionate Communities”:

- **Compassion:** “Compassion is a strong emotion, attuned to those in need. It is the progenitor of courageous acts.” Dacher Keltner
- **Culture:** “Culture encompasses rules for conduct internalized in human beings, which lead them to think and act in characteristic ways.” Conrad Phillip Kottak
- **Communication:** “Communication is a process of passing information and understanding from one person to another.” Keith Davis
- **Collaboration:** “Collaboration begins with trust and a shared vision for what you want to accomplish. Those are two things that you simply can’t force on people.” John Spencer
- **Community:** “A particular type of social grouping that explains the strong sense of shared identity that people feel, and membership of particular groups give us a lens through which we see the world.” Toby Lowe

Building Compassionate Communities take time, patience, leadership, and sacrifice, but the outcome or WHAT is “to help others experience the well-being of being part of a

compassionate community so that they can partner with others to build compassionate communities in their families, friendships, organizations, and neighborhoods.”

My book, *Building Compassionate Communities*, is designed to be a stand-alone volume, but for those of you who want to go “deeper” in your understanding how to Build Compassionate Communities I have developed a discovery-learning workbook titled *The Innovation and Change Workbook* that you can purchase on Amazon.com.