

The Compassionate Leader Article

By Dr. Paul G. Leavenworth

The Convergence group

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. Being a Compassionate Leader 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:

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

Assumptions About Compassionate Leading: Here are ten assumptions that I have adapted for leadership from content in my two previous books on compassion, that along with this book form “The Compassion Trilogy”:

- 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 leader-follower relationships.
- People who can gain most from leader-follower relationships tend to be relatively healthy and functional and are faithful and teachable.

My exploration of compassionate listening, communities, 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. But this does not just happen without leadership.

The Compassionate Leader: A Compassionate Leader “helps create caring relationships and communities for followers to experience value, belonging, celebration, and accomplishments.” Through my reading, research, and leadership experience, I have identified four primary characteristics of Compassionate Leaders:

- **Humility:** “Humility is a perfect antidote to the self-fixated spirit of our age... As a character strength, humility can be viewed as the opposite of pride, arrogance, and an inflated sense of our importance and talents. It is based on a fundamentally caring and compassionate attitude toward others.” Anna Katherina Schaffner
- **Respect:** “Respect is a cornerstone of effective leadership. When employees feel respected by their leaders, they are more likely to trust and follow them. Respectful leaders are also more likely to earn the respect of their colleagues, which can help them build strong working relationships and achieve their goals.” The Editors of Inlightio.com
- **Serving:** “The servant-leader is servant first, it begins with a natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first, as opposed to, wanting power, influence, fame, or wealth.” Robert Greenleaf
- **Empowering:** “Managers are increasingly opting for a leadership style that empowers employees. Rather than just delegating tasks, they encourage their teams to be more independent in the workplace. Some benefits of this leadership style include increased growth, creativity, trust and overall satisfaction amongst employees.” Forbes Business Council

When leaders grow in these areas they become compassionate leaders that “motivate, train, and empower others in compassionate listening in order to experience 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, *The Compassionate Leader*, is designed to be a stand-alone volume, but for those of you who want to go “deeper” in your understanding of Compassionate Leadership I have developed a discovery-learning workbook titled *The Servant Leadership Workbook* that you can purchase on Amazon.com.

