

First Parish Church of Groton, Small Group Ministry

Session : Compassion

Facilitator/Date _____

Supplies: Chalice, Singing Bowl, matches, printed questions for each participant, pencils, pens

1. Chalice Lighting/Opening Words: 2 min

We light our chalice today to celebrate our curiosity and interest in compassion.

We come together in a spirit of friendship and love,
with open minds and open hearts.

Our intent is to build a deeper sense of community and connection.

We will listen quietly to one another seeking renewal,
spiritual meaning and growth.

May our time together be blessed with love and light.

May we feel peace and ease with ourselves and with one another as we share.

2. Check-in/Sharing: up to 30 min (Divide the time by number of participants, allowing for short interval of silence in between sharing.) Invite people to check in by sharing:

- *How is it with your spirit? —or—What has stirred your passion this week?*

- *And/or: Did you have any further thoughts about last week's topic?*

3. Topic: TOTAL TIME 60 min

A. Introduction and Questions: 5 min

Compassion is a responsive movement of the heart;
in the Buddhist tradition it is described as “the heart's quiver in response to suffering.”

Compassion lies at the heart of what it means to be truly human,
and it is what allows you to be at peace in the midst of pain and turmoil.

Compassion is an energetic response, not a mental idea.

~Phillip Moffitt

If you want others to be happy, practice compassion.

If you want to be happy, practice compassion.

~Dalai Lama

In separateness lies the world's great misery,

in compassion lies the world's true strength.

~Buddha

(Distribute Questions, last page, & Read out loud)

B. Silence for Reflection/Writing/Drawing: 10 min

Invite group into 5-10 minutes of silence during which they are asked to reflect on the questions.

Participants are invited to use this time for writing and drawing their responses if they wish.

[Tell your group to feel free to invent their own better-suited questions if they prefer.]

C. Sharing: 40 min

Invite each person to share their response as they feel moved, rather than clockwise. Give each person equal time to share. *If time* after each person has shared, invite people into a more free flowing discussion of the theme. Coaches may need to direct the conversation back to the questions.

4. Check-out: 10 min

Encourage people to check out with a final thought or reflection about the theme (or any other thoughts about the session) and how the session might shape or impact their life in any way in the week ahead.

5. Introduction of Next Week's Topic 1 min

6. Closing Words 1 min

Just as a mother protects with her life
Her child, her only child,
So with a boundless heart
Should one cherish all living things
Radiating kindness over the entire world.
~Buddha's sermon on Loving Kindness

7. Blessing to Extinguish the Chalice (Distribute Blessing) 1 min

May the efforts we have made here today
to listen with caring and compassion sustain us in the days ahead.
May these efforts bring peace into our lives
and into the lives of all those whom we touch.
And now, may love surround us, may joy gladden us, may peace lie deep within.
May our lives and the lives of all those we love go well.

Questions for Reflection: Compassion

1. How have you come to know compassion in your life?
2. What is your most recent memory of compassion?
3. How does giving and receiving compassion feel to you?
4. When you witness a lack of compassion, how do you react?
5. In what ways do you cultivate the inner conditions for compassion toward yourself and others?