

I Have a Dream for Compassion Re-Imagined in 2020

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Einstein said, "Insanity is doing the same thing over and over expecting different results." I disagree.

Here's what I believe. Insanity is doing the same thing over and over knowing you'll get the same results, but wishing for something different. Humans are creatures of habit. We do the same things over and over because deep down we want the same results. We want things to be predictable because that doesn't require us to take risks and be brave.

Yet we wish for more. We crave better relationships, more meaningful work, a purposeful life, inclusion, and the satisfaction of contributing. We can wish for something different, but until we adopt a new mindset and skills, we would be insane to expect anything different.

The answer to end the insanity is compassion. To be human is to have compassion. Compassion is what connects us and gets us back on track when we lose our way. Compassion is the key to our survival. Compassion is how we make diversity our greatest strength.

Unfortunately, as humans we've developed some compassion habits that are holding us back, even though we wish for more and often have good intentions.

Most people believe that compassion mostly empathy. Wrong. Compassion is much more than a feeling. It's also about creative problem-solving and advocacy for justice.

Most people believe that compassion is a soft skill. Wrong. Compassion is a life skill. It's not for the faint of heart.

Most people believe that compassion is just for self-less servant leaders. Wrong. Compassion honors our own needs and boundaries too. Did you know that practicing compassion stimulates the reward centers of the brain?

Most people believe that compassion is something that comes naturally; you either have it or you don't. Wrong. Compassion can be learned and doesn't require a touchy-feely personality.

Most people believe that compassion is about alleviating suffering. Wrong. Compassion is about suffering alongside to enhance people's value, capability, and responsibility. We are in this together.

It's time to re-imagine compassion. Here's my definition.

Compassion is the practice of demonstrating that we are valuable, capable, and responsible in every interaction.

Compassion is a habit, a way of life that is cultivated daily and manifested through our behavior, in every interaction. Because we are valuable, everyone deserves to be heard, affirmed, safe, invited, and included.

Because we are capable, everyone deserves the invitation to contribute, participate, take ownership, and be part of the solution. Because we are responsible, everyone is accountable for their feelings, thoughts, and actions. Not just one of these, but all three. All the time. In every interaction. And it applies to you too.

How would you act differently if you believed that everyone, including you, was valuable, capable, and responsible?

Einstein also said this, "When you change the way you look at things, the things you look at change."

Change the way you look at compassion and your world can change in 2020.



About the Author: Nate Regier, Ph.D. is the CEO and founding owner of Next Element Consulting, a global leadership firm dedicated to bringing compassion into the workplace. Dr. Regier is a former practicing psychologist and expert in social-emotional intelligence, interpersonal communication and leadership.

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