

# BUILD YOUR OWN VIRTUE: COMPASSION



Students are to use the Virtue Knowledge, Virtue Reasoning and Virtue Practice Tools below to think through what, when and how to practise the virtue of compassion.

Tell students to think also, about how it relates to the other virtues they have studied. How well do they ‘practise’ compassion?

A lead in could be: compassion means to ‘suffer with’ others. How do we do this meaningfully? Other angles could include comparing it with empathy.

Students may draw inspiration from literature, or history, etc.

Looking at supposed role models of compassion could also be helpful and informative when articulating the virtue.

Given that the Virtue of Compassion is shrouded with different conceptions of empathy, sympathy, pity and compassion, this Chapter also suggests a structure to the Virtue of Compassion. This is set out below.

CLARIFYING SOME CONCEPTS RELATED TO COMPASSION			
<b>EMOTIONAL PRECONDITIONS</b>	<p align="center"><b>EMPATHY</b></p> <p align="center"><b>Cognitive:</b> I understand what you feel but don't feel it – I know how you feel;  <b>Affective:</b> I feel for you and with you, because you feel that way...                      But I'm not necessarily concerned about alleviating your suffering; I might even be taking vicious delight in seeing you suffer so undeservedly.</p> <p align="center"><b>SYMPATHY</b></p> <p align="center">I have fellow feelings for you; I feel sorry for you in this situation, irrespective of desert</p>		
	<b>(SATISFIED) INDIGNATION:</b>	<i>Emotion: It is important for P to be flourishing, but P is in distress or deficient in way X; may P's distress be relieved or P's deficiency made up.<sup>1</sup></i>	
<b>EMOTION</b>	I feel pleasure at your deserved bad fortune.	I feel pained at your [undeserved] bad fortune.  It is serious suffering; it is undeserved; your plight should be of direct concern to me.	I feel pained at your deserved bad fortune.
	<b>CALLOUSNESS</b>	<b>COMPASSION</b>	<b>PITY</b>
<b>ACTION</b>	I am unmoved to alleviate the suffering of others; or, I think you do not deserve to have your suffering alleviated.	I will alleviate the suffering of P by...	I am too moved to alleviate the suffering of others; I wallow in it – I identify with your vulnerabilities – the human condition is a fragile one – but it's all so overwhelming- you really don't deserve such treatment.
	<p align="center">I feel pleasure at another's deserved good fortune: <b>GRATULATION</b></p> <p align="center"><b>Emotion = Joy</b></p> <p align="center"><i>It is important that X be in condition Y; and X is in condition Y<sup>2</sup> - in part, as a result of my contributions to alleviating the situation.</i></p>		

I feel pain at another's undeserved bad fortune.  
**COMPASSION**

I feel pain at another's undeserved good fortune.  
**INDIGNATION**

I feel pleasure at another's deserved bad fortune:  
**SATISFIED INDIGNATION**

I feel pleasure at another's deserved good fortune:  
**GRATULATION**

<sup>1</sup> Roberts, R. C. (2003) Emotions: An essay in Aid of Moral Psychology(CUP)

<sup>2</sup> Roberts, R.C. (2003)



<b>THE VIRTUE KNOWLEDGE TEMPLATE</b>	
<b>WHAT CAN THOSE WHO HAVE THIS VIRTUE DO PARTICULARLY WELL?</b>	
<b>WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF ACTING OUT THIS VIRTUE?</b>	For me:  For situation/others when this virtue is called for:  If I don't act out this virtue in this situation then:
<b>WHEN MIGHT I HAVE TO PRACTISE THIS VIRTUE IN MY LIFE?</b>	
<b>WHICH EMOTIONS ALERT ME TO THE NEED TO PRACTISE THIS VIRTUE? HOW DO THESE EMOTIONS EXPRESS THEMSELVES?</b>	
<b>WHICH DILEMMAS OR SCENARIOS ILLUMINATE THE PRINCIPLES AND STRUCTURE OF THE VIRTUE?</b>	





**VIRTUE REASONING GUIDELINES**

<b>DELIBERATIONS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* How have your past experiences helped you think about this situation?               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* think through similar situations</li> <li>* think through emotions</li> <li>* think through reasons</li> </ul> </li> <li>* How can you apply the 'lessons of life' and principles you have learned to this situation?               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* what have you learned about acting well and thinking well, and how can you do this in this particular situation?</li> </ul> </li> <li>* What kind of person do you hope to become in this situation?               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* given a commitment to being a person who chooses wisely, as opposed to foolishly, to being courageous rather than cowardly, or rash, to being fairer, rather than unfair, to being self-controlled rather than indulgent, how can you give expression to these aspirations in your circumstances?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>EVALUATION</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* What are the morally relevant features of the situation and how have you weighted them?               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Of what (or whom) do you need to be aware, or sensitive to?</li> <li>* Which features are in competition?</li> <li>* Which features contradict?</li> <li>* How will you reconcile these tensions?</li> </ul> </li> <li>* To whom have you looked for advice, and/or inspiration, and why? Are they good sources?</li> <li>* What might the implications of your decision be, both positively and negatively?</li> </ul>

**TOWARDS THE GOLDEN MEAN**

<b>UNDERDOING IT - DEFICIENCIES</b>	<b>THE GOLDEN MEAN</b>	<b>OVERDOING IT - EXCESSES</b>
Which emotions, desires, and actions would be expressive of underdoing it in relation to the issue?	Which emotions, desires and actions would be spot on, in giving expression to the virtue(s) required to handle this situation?	Which emotions, desires, and actions would be expressive of overdoing it in relation to the issue?
	What will you do to give expression to this?  I will:	





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**21**

	<b>STATES OF CHARACTER</b>	<b>MY EMOTIONS</b>	<b>MY OPTIONS AND MY CHOICES</b>	<b>MY ACTIONS</b>
<b>STAGE 4</b>	<b>VIRTUOUS: SPOT ON</b>	RIGHT	RIGHT	RIGHT
<b>STAGE 3</b>	<b>CONTINENT: I DID THE RIGHT THING, BUT THROUGH GRITTED TEETH</b>	WRONG	RIGHT	RIGHT
<b>STAGE 2</b>	<b>INCONTINENT: I KNEW WHAT THE RIGHT THING TO DO WAS, BUT GOT CARRIED AWAY BY MY EMOTIONS AND DIDN'T DO IT!</b>	WRONG	RIGHT	WRONG
<b>STAGE 1</b>	<b>UNWISE: I NEED A RETHINK HERE</b>	WRONG	WRONG	WRONG

