Seeds of Compassion
Facilitator Guide

What concrete steps can we take today to tend and cultivate the compassion within us for other human beings, to make the world a better place?

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

What does "compassion" mean? Who is it aimed at? Can we expand our definitions to include all people? What concrete steps can we take today to tend the compassion within us and make the world a better place?

FRAMING THE ISSUE

Trees, plants, and the seeds they start from, are a metaphor for life, growth and renewal. Just as seeds need proper light, water, food and caring to grow, so do humans. We need to dig deep, find the compassion to care about each person and ensure that they have the freedom and conditions to survive and to thrive. Compassion, justice and love are core Jewish and human values. We must act in order to tend our "compassion muscles." Compassion is not finite, it energizes and enables others to pay it forward.

Info For Facilitator

🎯 **Target Audience:**

This program includes variations for different ages (teens, adults and children) and is appropriate for different audiences: all nationalities and faiths

⏱️ **Length Of Program:**

30 minutes opening exercise and discussion, followed by planting activity

💼 **Materials & Prep:**

For Teens or Adults:
- Smart phone (camera)
- Posters /pictures of hostages
- Scrap paper, writing implements
- Source Sheet with 'One Tiny Seed' poem

For Children:
- The Seed of Compassion book by the Dalai Lama
  (or read aloud version)

For All:
- Site to plant: Seeds, plants, trees and materials to plant them OR Planting station: seeds/beans, containers, spray bottles, water
- Plant stakes/tags, permanent markers to label plants
- Tape
- Sticky notes and pens

📅 **Potential Tie-In Dates**

Tu B'shvat: January 24/25 2024;
World Water Da: 22nd March 2024;
Arbor Day: Fri, Apr 26;
World Environment Day: June 5.

LET'S EXPLORE

For Adults:

■ *Facilitator asks each person to take a selfie. Afterwards, each participant chooses a picture of a hostage and takes a piece of paper/pen.*

■ *Look deeply at the picture and observe/list:*
  • What is the same in each of us?
  • What is different?

■ *Turn to the person on your right and compare lists.*

■ *Facilitator introduces a group discussion:*
  We are all human and can see ourselves in others and vice versa. Can you imagine what it is like for the person in the picture in captivity, in tunnels underground, without light, water, food to survive and thrive? Trees, plants and the seeds they start from, are a metaphor for life, growth and renewal. Just as seeds need proper light, water, food and caring to grow, so do humans. We need to dig deep, find the compassion to care about each person and ensure that they have the freedom and conditions to survive and to thrive. We are them, they are us, we are all connected.
■ *Read poem **One Tiny Seed** by Rachel Goldberg, mother of Hersh Goldberg Polin who is captive in Gaza, and discuss the questions at the bottom of the sheet.*

For Children:

■ *Facilitator opens:*
  How can we show that we care for each other? This is called "compassion." Trees, plants and the seeds they start from, need proper light, water, food and caring to grow, just like us. We need to dig deep in ourselves, like digging in the soil, to find the compassion to care about each person and ensure that they have the freedom and conditions to survive and to thrive. We are them, they are us, we are all connected.

■ *Read the children's book "The Seed of Compassion" by the Dalai Lama or <u>watch and listen to it here</u>.*

■ *Invite the children to discuss:*
  • How did the Dalai Lama learn compassion as a young child?
  • What does he describe as the seed of compassion?
  • Who are the sprouts in his story?
  • What makes humans special according to this story?
  • Who have you learned how to be compassionate from? Can you think of specific acts of compassion you have experienced?

Additional Resources for Further Exploration:

• Biblical verses on compassion:
  • A world of compassion shall be built (Psalms 89:3)
  • Love your neighbor as yourself (Leviticus 19:18)
• <u>On Compassion "fatigue" for adults</u>
• <u>Short animation on compassion for children</u>
• <u>Compassion in Action</u>

TAKE ACTION!

Engage with one of the following plant related actions in honor of the hostages:

- Gather together to plant trees/plants as a concrete symbol of our compassion and caring for each other and for the earth. Seeds, plants and trees need the same basic conditions to survive that we do and the hostages do! Plant a seed, plant or tree in honor of a hostage. Attach tags/stakes with hostage names.

  For those in Israel: Plant Seeds of Hope

- Set up a growing station as a concrete symbol of our compassion and caring for each other and for the earth. Here is some info on fastest growing plants.

- Optional Activity: Water some seeds only with very salty water, observe how they grow. Connect to poem: One Tiny Seed: "All those tears, our sea of tears they all taste the same. Can we take them, gather them up, remove the salt and pour them over our desert of despair and plant one tiny seed."

- Give out seed packets with information of hostages, poem and call to advocacy, action at garden centers, florists, with orders from large garden supply stores, gardening affinity groups.

- For Adults: Take photos and share widely to mainstream/social media or invite media outlets to the event to create an even wider buzz!

CLOSING INTENTION

As in every generation, our challenge is to apply the value of compassion to the suffering that we find in our midst. We must tend to each other with kindness and compassion, like we must tend to seeds, plants, trees. The hostages are suffering, they are just like us and they demand our compassion now. Let's plant the seeds now that will create a brighter future for all humans.

Rachel Goldberg Speech at the United Nations in Geneva, on the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. December 12, 2023

Click to watch video

Everyone Counts

The **#BringThemHomeNow** Educational Toolkit