1 Introduce Compassion

This curriculum offers approximately 3 hours of instruction, divided into 3 sections. Each section can be broken into smaller pieces if you prefer short lessons. For additional resources, visit www.CharacterFirstEd.com.

3 WAYS TO BUILD COMPASSION:

Educate
Focus on compassion for a period of time. Use the lessons in this curriculum to talk about compassion and why it matters. Look for ways to emphasize compassion during other subjects, such as reading, math, language, history, social studies, science, music, health, and athletics.

Evaluate
Think about daily decisions in the light of good character. Ask yourself and your students, “Is this the right thing to do?” Use the “I Wills” on page 4 as behavioral objectives, and refer to these standards when correcting negative attitudes and behavior.

Celebrate
Catch people doing good and point out the character qualities they demonstrated. Children thrive on sincere encouragement, so don’t overlook the little opportunities to praise each day.

DEFINE COMPASSION
(Discussion, 15 minutes)

Point out and discuss key words in the definition. Review and commit the definition to memory. Use the Compassion Character Card (sold separately) to remind or reward students who learn the definition.

Definition: Helping those who are hurting.

The word compassion comes from the Latin word com, meaning “with,” and the word passio, meaning “to bear or suffer.” Compassion means to “suffer with” those who are hurting and provide what comfort or assistance you can.

Compassion begins with sympathy, which is seeing someone’s pain. It is noticing a student who skins his knee or a friend who hurts her arm. It is being alert to a weary co-worker or a stranger who needs assistance.

Compassion also includes empathy, which is feeling someone’s pain. Once you notice an injury, empathy means you imagine how much it hurts. This creates a feeling of duty, responsibility, and sometimes urgency to help find a remedy.

This brings us to the full meaning of compassion, which is doing something to relieve someone’s pain. It is not enough to see needs and feel badly for those who are hurting. Compassion means getting involved, investing in others, and finding ways to “bear someone’s burden” in order for healing to occur.

Related concepts:
sensitivity, generosity, kindness, help, love, charity, intervention

Discussion:
• Think of a time you were sick, injured, or feeling badly. Did someone help you? How did that person show compassion?
• What is the opposite of compassion? (Being indifferent, selfish, harsh, or cruel.)
• How can you “look out for others” at your school?
• How can you show compassion to someone who is being picked on, teased, bullied, or harassed by other students?

“Be kind; every man you meet is fighting a hard battle.”
—J. Macalren
FIRST RESPONSE
(Exploration, 20 minutes)

Use a first aid kit and a blank note card to teach students ways they can respond to physical and emotional hurt.

Compassion is noticing when people are hurt and doing what you can to help them feel better.

Physical Hurt
Physical hurt includes cuts, scrapes, bruises, twisted ankles, stomach aches, fever, vomiting, dizziness, a bloody nose, or anything else that's wrong with a person's body.

When you see people with these kinds of problems, get help fast. Your teacher or parents should know what to do, so call for their help as soon as you can. (Show students the contents of a first aid kit and explain the purpose of each item so they are familiar with them.)

Emotional Hurt
Emotional hurt includes being sad, lonely, afraid, worried, depressed, or getting one's feelings hurt. One way you can show compassion is to ask, "How are you doing?" and to listen attentively. Perhaps you could join the person for lunch and be friendly. Maybe you could write a note, draw a picture, or give some flowers. (Show students a note card and talk about what you could write or draw on it.)

Stand up for those who are picked on or being bullied. Get help for those who need it, especially if they are in danger or talk about hurting themselves.

ACTIVE COMPASSION
(Project, 20 minutes)

Encourage students to find three ways they can show compassion this week.

Use the following list to prompt discussion about how students can show compassion. Assign students to find at least three opportunities this week to demonstrate compassion, then share their experiences with the class next week.

Depending on student age, use this activity as a writing prompt, public speaking opportunity, or drawing/coloring assignment.

Suggested Opportunities:
- Visit a widowed or elderly person.
- Deliver a sack of groceries to a charitable organization.
- Give flowers in memory of a friend or relative.
- Donate clothes or blankets to a homeless shelter.
- Send a card to someone who needs encouragement.
- Give someone at home a break by doing his or her chores.
- Raise money for a good cause.
- Gather toys or stuffed animals for a children's home.
Character, Skill, and Knowledge

How can you encourage a student who did his best, but his answers were wrong? Or how can you commend a student who gave perfect answers on her assignment, but was late turning it in?

One approach is to separate praise from correction. Instead of connecting or qualifying your thoughts by saying, “This was good, but...” draw a distinction between the student’s character, skill, and knowledge.

- “I can tell you put a lot of energy into this coloring sheet... thank you for your diligence! Now I want you to color a new picture, and let’s see how close to the lines you can draw. All the color should be inside the lines. Put just as much effort into it as before, and let’s focus on accuracy this time.”
- “Thank you for writing your report so neatly. Your orderly handwriting made it very easy to read. Regarding your spelling, I circled several incorrect words. I want you to find the words in a dictionary and rewrite these paragraphs with the correct spelling.”
- “Great job answering these questions. I can tell you know the material. What I need from you now is to turn in your assignment on time. Okay?”

I WILL...
(Discussion, 25 minutes)

1. Notice when others are hurting.
   Compassion starts by noticing when others are sad, hurt, or not feeling well.
   - How can you tell if someone is not well physically?
   - How can you tell if someone is hurt emotionally?

2. Stop to help.
   Compassion is not just seeing a need—it means stopping what you are doing and getting involved. Do not overlook those in trouble or assume someone else will help. That “someone else” might be you.
   - What could you do if a friend fell and scraped his or her knee?
   - What can you do if it is not safe to stop and help someone, such as a suspicious stranger or along a busy road?

3. Take time to listen.
   Sometimes you can help by just taking the time to listen. This says, “Your need is important, and I’m here to help you.”
   - Who is a good listener when you have something to talk about?
   - What does a good listener do (or not do) while the other person talks?

4. Do what I can.
   You can’t solve every problem, but you can usually do something useful, even if it is very small. Get others involved to solve bigger needs.
   - Think of a recent natural disaster or tragedy. How could you help if something similar happens again?
   - How could you help a family member who starts feeling sick?

5. Be kind, regardless of differences.
   Compassion is helping others without regard to race, gender, faith, age, or nationality. Don’t let personal differences keep you from being loving or kind.
   - How can you be kind to someone younger than you? What about someone older? How can you be kind to someone you disagree with?
   - Think of someone who is very different from you. Can you think of at least ten things you still have in common with that person?
COMPASSION CUBE
(Project, 25 minutes)

Use this activity to emphasize the five “I Wills.” Download an easy template at www.CharacterFirstEd.com.

If you don’t have a template, make a cube by folding a sheet of paper into quarters the long direction and thirds the short direction. Unfold the paper and cut along the lines as illustrated. Fold the cube and secure the edges with tape. Make symbols for each “I Will,” tape them to the top and sides of the cube, and label each symbol with its meaning.

Supplies: paper, scissors, markers, tape

1. Cut on solid lines, and fold dashed lines.
2. Fold over and tape.
3. Fold in ends and tape.
4. Label as shown.

ENCOURAGEMENT CARDS
(Project, 30 minutes)

Give students an opportunity to invest in the lives of others by making colorful and encouraging cards.

Window Card:
Fold a sheet of paper in half and draw pictures on the inside. Draw a square on the front of the card, and cut out three sides of the square to reveal only part of the picture inside, creating curiosity to open the card and read the message.

Sweet Notes:
Cut some paper into flower shapes. Write encouraging messages on the flower petals, and decorate the rest with crayons or markers. Use tape to secure a piece of candy to the flower’s center.

Bunches of Thoughts:
Cut a variety of flower shapes out of colored paper. Write encouraging messages on the flowers, and tape pipe cleaners to the back as stems. Collect flowers into a bouquet, and tie ribbon around the flower stems.

Sunshine Basket:
Collect written notes, photographs, packaged food, candy, small toys, and any other treats to place in a basket. Label the basket with the recipient’s name and deliver personally.

FIRST AID BASICS
(Exploration, 15 minutes)

Teach some basic first aid to your class. If possible, invite a local first aid instructor or first responder to help you.

- Do no harm; handle injuries gently.
- Call “911” for emergencies.
- Stop bleeding by elevating a wound and applying pressure.
- Clean wounds before bandaging.
- Use antibiotic ointments to prevent infection.
- Secure bandages with tape when necessary.
- Use an ice pack to reduce swelling.

COMPASSION POEM
(Literacy Connection, 15 minutes)

Teach this poem as a way to memorize the five “I Wills.” Watch the video at www.CharacterFirstEd.com.

I will stop to help the people who are hurting desperately,
I will take the time to listen when they talk about their need.

I will try to help in ways that last, I’ll lend a helping hand.
And no matter who the person is, I’ll give the best I can.

My character is what will make a leader out of me.
So next time through, let’s say it more ENTHUSIASTICALLY!
Florence Nightingale

"What should we call her?" asked Mr. Nightingale as he held his newborn daughter. "What should we call our little girl born in Florence, Italy?"

"That's it!" said her mother. "Let's call her Florence! When we're home in England we'll always remember where we were on this special day."

By age 16, Florence felt called to become a nurse. She went with her mother to visit the poor, and she soon began taking food and supplies to the needy by herself. She spent time tending the sick in her neighborhood, and this made her want to become a nurse even more.

Unable to keep up with the herd, sick or injured zebra fall easy prey to predators. Rather than leaving weak members behind, the whole zebra herd slows down in order to stay together and keep from losing one of their own.

THE ZEBRA (Story, 15 minutes)

Deep in the heart of Africa, a herd of zebras rested under a cluster of trees. The stallion of the herd, an older male, walked among the mares and their foals. Some of the young zebras played a short distance away, but never beyond the watchful eye of the old stallion.

Two mother zebras took their positions nearby. They faced opposite directions, keeping watch for any sign of danger. Everything seemed peaceful, until one mother spotted the long slender tail of a lion.

The mare warned the herd with a loud snort. The stallion looked up and saw not one, but three lions walking through the grass. In a flash, he bolted toward the young zebra playing in the field while the rest of the herd jumped to their feet and followed the old stallion.

The lions jumped from the cover of the grass. They charged toward the herd, hoping to single out one of the young or injured zebras that would be easier prey. But the older mares moved all of the young zebras into the middle of the herd for their protection.

The zebras also ran in a tight group, leaving no one behind. As long as they stayed together, their black and white stripes worked like camouflage to confuse the chasing lions. The zebras blended together so well that the lions couldn't tell where to strike. One wrong move, and a lion might find a zebra's hoof in its face!

The zebras ran through a shallow lake before they came to a deep ravine. The old stallion jumped over the ravine with the rest of the herd behind him. One Zebra after another jumped across until they were safe on the other side. Soon the lions gave up their chase. Many other animals might have fallen prey to the hungry lions, but not these zebras—because they took care of one another.

Slow Down

When young or injured zebras cannot run fast, the entire herd slows down and stays together instead of leaving the slowest behind. That is because zebras are
safe not by running faster than a pack of lions, but by staying as a group and letting their stripes blend together.

Compassion means slowing down enough that you notice needs and take time to help. Don’t get so busy or focused on yourself that you miss the opportunity to help someone else.

**Help the Hurting**
A single, weak zebra is easy prey for a lion. That is why zebras do not leave a wounded or sick zebra to fend for itself. Rather than abandoning the weak, a strong stallion will face the attacker and fight valiantly. When the danger passes, one zebra will lick clean another zebra’s wounds to prevent infection.

Compassion means helping those who are physically hurt and standing up for those who are weak or vulnerable. Don’t be a bully who takes advantage of others. Be kind, be brave, and defend those who need help.

**Be a Friend**
Some zebras are loners, but most live together in herds up to 100,000. Within a large herd, smaller “family” groups care and defend one another. Zebras also welcome other grazing animals into the herd, such as buffalo, wildebeest, or giraffes.

Compassion means looking out for your family members, friends, classmates, and neighbors just as you hope they are looking out for you. When you really care about others, you will invest the time and energy to do what you can to help.

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**ZEBRA STRIPES**
*(Project, 25 minutes)*


Use a template to trace and cut out one zebra for each student using heavy paper. Give students two pieces of yarn, one black and one white, both 9 feet in length. Wrap both pieces of yarn simultaneously around the zebra’s body until it is completely covered with stripes. Use the last few inches of yarn to make a tail.

Staple the zebra to another sheet of heavy paper. Draw trees, grass, and sky around the zebra as if it were home in Africa. Write “Zebras take care of others!” across the top.

**Supplies:** black and white yarn (9-foot strands), heavy paper, scissors, markers, stapler

Watch a video of the Zebra Story at www.CharacterFirstEd.com
OVERVIEW: Compassion starts by noticing when others are sad, hurt, or not feeling well. However, compassion is not just seeing a need—it means stopping what you are doing and getting involved. Even something simple such as listening, offering advice, or sharing a meal can help a person or family in need. Even though you can't solve every problem, you can usually find something useful to do, even if it is very small.

Compassion

Definition: Helping those who are hurting

I WILL...

☐ Notice when others are hurting.
☐ Stop to help.
☐ Take time to listen.
☐ Do what I can.
☐ Be kind, regardless of differences.

Zebras show compassion by caring for their young, protecting the injured, and defending one another.

CHARACTER QUIZ:

1. What does it mean to be a “good neighbor” when you see someone in need?

2. When have you been sick or injured? How did others help you during your time of need?

3. Showing compassion means you: a. listen carefully. b. give wisely. c. do what you can to help. c. all of the above.

4. Compassion means giving people everything they ask for: TRUE? or FALSE?

5. Sometimes compassion means showing “tough love.” What do you think this means? Can you think of an example?