

compassionate activism

Session 9 Video Transcription

Sandra: Hey everyone. So this is the ninth session for Compassion Activism, and it's actually our second to last session! Sad face. But hopefully people are going to stick around to do next training as well where you get a free coupon to enroll. If you have any questions about that, check your emails, it's in there. If not, email me and I can give it to you again.

So today, we are going to talk about the fifth and last practice of Compassion Activism, and this is the practice of shared envisioning and non-cooperation. I'm actually going to modify that for the next training and call that "compassionate or non-loving cooperation" because a lot of engage in non-cooperation, but it's not very compassionate or loving.

We've done all the rest of the work. We've gone through practices 1-4, and we got to a place where we recognize each other's realities. We have actually become connected because we've shared, and we care about each other's realities. Now that we're connected, we can co-create something.

Sometimes, when we try to co-create something with each other, it doesn't work. We can't come to an agreement; then we agree to non-cooperate. How do you do that in a way that's not what we typically do, which is throw them under the bus, get resentful, and not like them as a human being? So how can we come to a non-agreement in a way that's still loving, still compassionate, and still humanizing?

As always, I want folks to choose a situation. Select a recent situation that is moderately emotionally charged. The way you know this is: do you feel stuck in it? Because the fact is is that the future is unknown, so there's actually an infinite amount of possibilities as to how it could turn out. Now, of course there are some patterns, there are some dynamics that are very pervasive, that is going to push the future down a certain path: true, very, very true. However, it could be different. If we didn't believe it was possible to be different, then we wouldn't be doing this practice. If we didn't think it was possible to change, we wouldn't be trying. I think all of us have hope that the future can look different, but as the pain from the past builds up and up, it becomes harder and harder to believe in that.

I want you to think about situations where you become really stuck, because that's not about the future. The future can be anything like I said. When you feel stuck, it's because of some fear, of some future being a certain way, so you don't want to do anything. That fear stems from a source of pain. So the point is to not get stuck in that swirling mess of fear, but to check in underneath it to the pain, the pain that is driving it. Because fear is scary. You don't want to touch it. For me personally, I would rather bypass fear and go straight to the pain. Fear is scary, I don't want to go there. It's scary over there. But fear is afraid of some pain reoccurring. I can do something with pain. I can take of it. Fear is like, I can't do too much with it.

The pain is from the past and you're afraid of that past repeating itself, and that's why you get stuck. If you don't know when you're caught up in toxic swirl, go for the points you feel stuck. You're stuck between a hard place and a rock. Damned if you do, damned if you don't. It doesn't even occur to you what you can do to make it different. You're just kind of there: upset, stressed, frustrated, angry, and you don't see a way out. Anytime things look impossible to you, this is when you can bring in compassion activism. It obviously applies to manifestations of systemic oppression, but really it's about anything. It's really about any moment in your life, which can be by yourself, it can be with somebody else. It could be about anything, really, but when you feel like you don't have options. You're just stuck. So those options manifest in ways where you feel powerless, you feel like you have no choice, you feel like you have no voice, it's pointless to do anything... or you have to, and you must, and you should, and you're whipping yourself. That perfectionism is really a huge, very normalized driver of toxic swirl. Because there are no "shoulds" in the world, there just "is." It's like the weather. It rains when it rains. It's sunny when it's sunny. Life just is what it is. And we make choices that impacts, but "right or wrong" is very negotiable. It's more about what do I choose to do, what is the impact on it? I'm just kind of fleshing that out because I think some people are still unsure of when they're caught in toxic swirl because they're so used to being in it, they're not noticing when it's happening.

Just look for those places, those moments, when you feel really stuck and you can't do anything, or it's pointless to try and do anything; or you have no choice in what you're doing, you have to do this thing. You have to push yourself, you have to soldier on, to make yourself.

I'm hoping everybody has a current moment, a situation, because we're starting out with a reflection time. So in this situation, I want you to think about how you felt and then presume that you're actually reliving it right now. That's why it's so emotionally charged for you, because even though it happened in the past, it's still present for you in this current moment even if the person is not here at all. So thinking about you in that situation -- and maybe you did try or didn't try in conversation -- a lack of conversation, there's still some energy exchange happening. There's still something going on between you two. It may not be

completely verbal. It may be more action, physical, a look, maybe it's you walking out of the room. Whatever it may be. There's still kind of an energy exchanged even if there's no verbal exchange. I want you to think: what was your intention in this conversation? And I'm asking this question because it's important to start noticing what you're doing. These are default ways of being in the world for you all. I'm teaching you something that you've probably never heard of, or maybe you have if you've been doing a lot of healing and personal development or spiritual practice, but most folks – if you haven't been deep in this work – you probably haven't thought about these things in this way. You've just been doing it. You haven't been noticing, observing, what you've been doing. You're bringing it forth into your consciousness.

That's what I want you to do. What is your intention in this conversation? What kind of world are you creating with this intention? If you're coming at the person being like, "I can't believe it, you have to agree with me. I'm just going to make you." We get that a lot in this program. "I just want make that person. Pray with them. Shake them. Have them stop." What is your intention? There's no right or wrong like I said earlier. It's just, what is the impact of this? What's the impact of what you're creating? Is that impact what you want? And the third question is, if your intention was to be compassionate toward yourself – meaning that you are in touch with the pain that you're feeling, and you are moved to do something about it to relieve that pain – so if your intention was to be compassionate toward yourself, and you're having that conversation to focus on getting you what you need, what would be different? What would be the type of world that you are creating with this compassionate intention toward yourself? I really want to focus and emphasize that because oftentimes in these conversations, people get really focused and hung up on the other person. They think that when I'm talking about compassion, I'm talking about them needing to be compassionate toward the other person.

Compassion is a feeling, folks. Compassion is a feeling, a feeling that I'm talking about where there's no right or wrong; they arise. They arise; they're like the weather. You can't control whether or not it's sunny. You can't control whether or not it's going to rain, if it's cold or not. You can decide what to do once it's sunny. You can decide to wear shorts, to wear some sunglasses. When it's raining you can decide to get an umbrella or not. But it's kind of pointless to be angry at the sun. But that's what we do, right? We get angry at our feelings and we want to make our feelings show up. We can't make them show up. You can invite them. There's a pattern. It's an invitation, by the way. So you invite them by shifting your focus away from the toxic swirl of resisting reality, making it wrong for what it is, and you shift it to what it's real in this current moment, which is pain. In an emotionally charged situation, there's pain happening that's driving it. So we shift our focus to the pain.

Compassion is actually when we are moved by the presence of pain to do something to relieve it. That's why I'm saying: don't focus on the other person

yet. Because when your pain is so strong, you have to take care of that. You have to take care of yourself. You can't be present to their pain. So if you force yourself to be compassionate toward them, that's not going to work out. It's not effective; you're forcing yourself. It's not an invitation. If it's not an invitation, it's probably coercion, and that's not what we're about right now. That's not the impact we want to have on the world. So keep the focus on yourself. As you keep the focus on yourself and your pain and how you can relieve that suffering, what are you creating with that? What's the world you're creating with that?

So I'm going to do a breakout room and put this in the chat box so people have it.

And you're all going to have ten minutes. So it's 6:20 now, so at 6:30, that's when we'll all be coming back. Hopefully by now, nobody's having problems with the breakout room.

Josette: Star-six on your phone, folks, is how you unmute. If you find yourself in the room, stay there. Hopefully someone will come. If they don't, you're welcome to think about these questions on your own and share them with the group as well later on in the chat.

[Please pause the video while completing the exercise.]

Sandra: Alright, we're coming back, folks. One by one. Five, four, three...we're all here!

Before we get going and talking about that exercise, I also just wanted to acknowledge that section 8 unfortunately still has not been put up. Usually we like to get it by Friday, but we have a new person doing both the transcription as well as the video, and so that has meant...it's taken them longer. There are some glitches going along the way. So we are hopefully going to get it up soon. I'll let you know and I'm very sorry for that. So I just wanted to acknowledge that.

So I wanted to do a whiteboard. For folks who want to do the whiteboard, if you can write: what did you learn from that exercise? Or if you prefer to put them in the chat box, please put them in the chat box.

Josette: Yeah especially longer entries, that way people have some space around. And for folks who don't know or can't see the annotation tools, basically you go into full screen, and at the top there's a little bar that says, "You are viewing Sandra Kim's screen," and there's "Options." If you hit "Options," and you click on "Annotate," you should get text, draw, arrow, etc. etc. And from there, you can edit the board.

Sandra: Thank you. And while people are typing, somebody asked to do a brief rundown of last week. Last week, we were actually continuing the fourth practice

of compassionate truth-telling and consciousness-raising inquiry. Essentially, just reemphasizing the importance on how to shift from toxic swirl – where we're resisting, judging, and shaming the other person and ignoring our own needs – but actually sharing our truth and then receiving their truth. Alternating, so that we could have both realities be acknowledged. The reason why we could have the space to acknowledge the other person's reality is because we've taken care of our own, the pain. The pain of what had happened. So by being able to go through the first three practices and apply that to ourselves, we're actually able to hold the space to bring those same practices that we did for ourselves to the other person, and that's what allows us to be able to hold both realities as true.

Somebody is sharing that when they get stuck, they're likely more focused on how they want the other person to change.

"Reflecting on my intentions for the conversations helps me realistically identify what might come out of the conversation."

"Reflect while you are conversing."

"Ask why."

"How can I love me more?"

So when you all write on top of each other, it's hard for me to read it.

Josette: The small one says, "Make myself do the right thing for me, including not allowing someone into my life."

Sandra: Non-cooperation, we'll get to that.

Josette: "Couldn't really get past number three."

Sandra: Which would've been, "What would be different if your intention was to be compassionate to yourself and to focus on your own needs?"

Josette: "Always coming back to you and not the other person."

"Reflect on how help or hinder healing."

And then we had a bunch in the chat as well.

Sandra: "Helpful to move beyond the fear and to the pain intention. Need to reevaluate my expectation rather than using some arbitrary 'should get X more done.'" Yeah.

So we come into it very focused normally on the other person, but as I've been saying, we can only invite the other person. We can invite them to share their truths, to share their perspectives, their internal realities; and we can invite them to meet our needs. But where we live is in our own internal reality, which is why it's important to stay where our power is, which is our internal reality and express our truth, our internal reality. And then we can also meet them in theirs, but we can't push and presume, and force and coerce, the other person. We can try. It just won't go very well. It's probably how you've all been trying to do it, and it's been creating a world of coercion, a world where you treat people like they're disposable. A world where you're trying to control people. And even when it's a world where the long-term goal is for social justice, the means do not justify the ends, because not only does it not justify the end, but it will not get you there to the end. Because what happens? The person resists. They can even be in agreement with you, but because of how you're coming at them, they're going to resist.

People get real it confused. They think that because you come at them perhaps angry, perhaps frustrated, you're not being super gentle and peaceful and nice, that's why they're resisting, and it's possible that sometimes that is, especially if they come from a background where loud voices were used to be abusive and controlling, some people have that background; but for a lot of folks, it's actually they're resisting more of the fact that you're trying to be controlling of them.

It's actually psychological healthy for them to resist you making them wrong as a human being, and you trying to be controlling and coercive toward them. That's actually a healthy response. This is why, oftentimes, when we do come at them angry and a bit frustrated, and we are also coming at them very blaming/shaming/judging, denying their reality, minimizing it. That all gets pushed together, but if we unpack them, we can come and express our full anger but taking responsibility for it and not make them wrong and solicit their reality. "This is my reality. I am furious right now because this happened. And what was going on with you that this seemed okay? I really want to know?" That is a fundamentally different way of coming at somebody, where you can express your anger. You can say it in really loud, fierce, aggressive ways; but you're not denying that they have a different reality than you. So you're inquiring.

People have any questions about that?

Nope?

Okay, good. Because you've got to let that go if you want to shift into something different, if you want to shift into the possibility of co-creating something. If you don't let this go, then you can't shift. And if you feel yourself struggling to let it go and you want to focus on the other person, focus on yourself. Bring it back to yourself and start going through our trustee first three practices. Apply it to

yourself first and then apply it the other person. The person who gets to go first is the person who is most emotionally charged.

It's better if the person who's more emotionally charged goes first because they're caught up in toxic swirl so they need to shift out of there if you want to have a productive conversation. If you're the person who's more emotionally charged, then you need to handle yourself. You need to get in touch with yourself and take care of yourself because you're really upset. That says something. What's important to know is that when you get stuck, there's a reason you get stuck. Our bodies do these marvelous things.

The more I talk about this, the more I impact why we do what we do, is really quite profound. We get stuck because we need to go deeper into ourselves and understand what is going on there. If you're caught in a toxic swirl, that's because you're running away from something. That's what toxic swirl is about. Notice that. Notice the toxic swirl and be like, "Hey I'm stuck. I can't move forward." And instead of just focusing on, "I need to do this, I need to focus on the other person. I need to move forward, I have to do something. Why can't I make myself? Why is it so hard? Oh my god, I don't want to do anything but I have to." So instead of trying to force yourself out of where you are, just be where you are. Mindfulness.

Bring your attention back to the present moment. Where are you now? You are stuck. You are not moving forward. If you focus on moving forward and trying to force yourself to go there, that's more make-believe. You're not there and you don't want to go there. It's not going to happen. You whipping yourself is not going to make it any easier. It's just going to be more painful. Instead, when you feel yourself get stuck, that's a big warning sign, being like, "Hey hey hey, blinkers! Stop. Pause. We're not going to let you go anyways!" So go deep. Go inwards.

So you start practicing the first three: humility and curiosity. Okay, so what is going on? And you start listening to realities, and you start distinguishing realities so you can start refocusing on yourself again. Because right now, in the toxic swirl, you've compressed them all into one: their reality, your reality, external reality, it's all one big mess. You think they should believe what you believe. You can't believe they don't believe what you believe. You don't understand why you can't just make them. You can't understand why they have a different understanding, a different perspective. Hot mess. Can't do anything there.

Distinguish. Their reality is separate and dependent of yours. You have your own reality. What's your reality? "Oh, let me go get in touch with it." So once we move through there, once we get in touch with it, and we are able to bring that to the other person, we move to a place where we an actually co-create. Because it's critical that you engage in the fourth practice: the fourth practice of compassionate truth-telling and consciousness-raising inquiry before you jump to

creating a shared vision. The reason why this is so critical is because if you do not engage in this, what you're doing is this: [showing two fists clashing representing different people] you're trying to push your reality into the other person, this person is trying to push their reality into you. Why? Status quo.

Systemic oppression is the status quo, and in systemic oppression, what we try to do is dominate each other. And we can dominate by trying to talk over them. We can also dominate by silencing ourselves and retreating. We don't have to think of that as a domination, but we're not engaging with them as a full human being. They're left wondering. Particularly if they care about us. They're left wondering what is going on with us. And they don't know. So that can actually be a domination technique, too

When you haven't engaged in this fourth practice, and you try to have this conversation, what you get is is this tug-of-war because you're so disconnected. You're disconnected because you haven't gotten in touch with each other's realities. All you have is a sense of your own reality, but you still don't really know what's going on with them. You have some speculations and that's it. So you can't co-create something when you're disconnected. You have this big pink elephant in the room.

You have to engage in sharing your realities, inquiring into their realities, and that helps you get reconnected. And when you do this, you start identifying things you have in common. You identify how you have shared values, perhaps goals, interests...this is actually a negotiation tactic that I read somewhere. When people are in conflict, they take two positions that are hardline against each other, and you see no way around it because they directly oppose in their positions – like, I'll give a mundane example: I want to spend the night at home, my partner wants to go out, perhaps common conflict in relationships – if we take the two positions at face-value and hold onto them, we'll just keep butting heads. Listen to what's important to them, because it's probably some stuff that overlaps with you.

So when I'm like, "I want to stay at home, well because for me, that's how I get quality time: is quiet conversation with my partner." I want my interest, my goal, is to reconnect, spend some down time, some quality time with my partner. For my partner perhaps, they're tired, and they get energy from going out and about. For them, that's spending quality time with me because they're sharing a new experience. That's what gets them jazzed up.

So what do we do? Well, now we understand that our realities are different, and what gets us motivated are different, we can decide. If our end-goal is to spend quality time together, we're connecting with each other, we're sharing something together...well, I like quiet, talking; my partner wants to go out and do something. Well, maybe we can go to a quiet place outside where we can walk around and talk and it's a new area for us. Maybe we'll go check out that new park that now

has the lotus blossoming right now, I don't know. I'm just making stuff up. You see what I'm saying though?

So once you really listen, then you can co-create something, because when you really listen to somebody, it brings forth care a lot of the times. When people have a need, it's because there's something missing in their lives that they want to have, and that lag is painful. In the presence of that pain, the presence of that need, compassion naturally arises. Now when compassion doesn't naturally arise, or you want to do something to address that need, it's usually because we have our own pain interfering, or ignorance is interfering with it, where either our pain is so large that it's pushing out the other person's reality, or that we've had so many toxic messages taught to us saying that these types of experiences -- of racism, or sexism, or transphobia, "they're just not real," like "it's not as bad as they think it is" -- or you just don't know about what's going on in people's lives because it's not your reality so you don't know anybody else like that.

A lot of folks question the statistic about how many women are sexually assaulted because they have personally never been told by their friends so they can't believe it to be true. So you have to understand that there's a level of proactive misinformation education that's going on, and people don't know how to process and heal their pain. When compassion doesn't naturally arise in the presence of pain, that's because there's something interfering with it, and that's when you go back and repeat the first three or four practices. So you either unpack your own pain and get in touch with it and take care of it, or you help the other person get in touch.

Another way of thinking about this is saying, "Yes." How we normally engage in this conversation is to say, "Yes, I know you feel like that, but it doesn't really matter." Or, "I don't really care," Or, "This is more important to me." That's often how I think about it; it's a "yes, but."

How about instead we do, "Yes, I get that's where you're coming from, that's your perspective, okay. And here's my perspective. So what can we do together?"

To give you another example of this, this actually happened today, where I received an email from one of the course members, and they had expressed concern how much time coaching one-on-one that I do during these sessions taking. They felt they weren't learning as much, and they wanted more time on doing exercises and reflections in the breakout rooms or listening to me share more or cover stuff.

And my gut reaction, for transparency sake, today has been an emotionally tiring day. No, today wasn't emotionally tiring. I started off the day emotionally tired, so I wasn't at my fullest emotional capacity to hold space for other people's realities because I was dealing with some stuff. Like when I said, when you have

your own pain, it grows. It pushes out other people's realities. So I was dealing with some stuff myself.

So when I received this email, my initial reaction was, "Yeah, really? I know this coaching I do is really pedagogically effective. I know people really enjoy them." So my initial reaction was to be very dismissive. Like I said, that was more because at that point and time, I didn't have any emotional energy to create space for that other person's reality. Me, knowing that I was emotionally tired, and I had to do this call later today, and I knew I had to be more emotionally available, I took a few hours off. Took care of myself. Took a walk with nature. Some processing. Talked to some of my friends. Do what I needed to do to take care of myself.

And then you know what happened? I started thinking about this email that I received, which thankfully I hadn't responded to yet. I saw what I thought was her point (there's speculation), but saw what needs she had; she wanted more practice on her own. I got that the coaching does take a lot of time up, and I could be doing some more group exercises. What I do sacrifice when I run out of time is the breakout rooms, so I got that. Because of that, I was able to send them an email and say, "Hey, I think coaching in front of everyone is actually really pedagogically important and effective, and it seems to me that what you're pointing out to me is that you want more practice time as individually during the sessions to apply it to yourself more and not just watch somebody else apply it to themselves. I got that. I can do that. Is that what you're talking about?"

And then we were able to go back-and-forth, and I kept checking in about my speculation. They shared with me, and I shared with them my reality. And after awhile, "Okay, I get that. Both are true."

I want to make what's effective for everybody as much as I can. So here's what I'm going to do. I'm going to do this thing that she said I skipped over – and I had skipped over that, that was our first reflection – and I was going to spend a little more time unpacking some of the points. I'm still going to do a coaching because I do think that's important, but I'm making sure that the other needs are also being met, so I was able to co-create that with them.

As you're doing this, if fear presents itself, if you feel stuck, that's from the past when you get stuck. This is different from proposing different things and just being like, "That doesn't work for me. That doesn't resonate with me. It doesn't feel like it's honoring my reality." Because that's different.

But when you get scared of trying something out, that's fear from the past. Like I said, the future has infinite possibilities, so if there's fear happening, we're afraid that the past is going to repeat itself, and that past was painful. That's when you go back to practice one through three.

So I'm going to pause right now and just take some questions, and then we're going to do a bathroom break. I want to take some questions here. If people are the phone, it's star-six, but you can also either start talking or put it in the chat box.

Josette: We actually had a question come in awhile ago. "What do you do in situations where you're being bullied or assaulted?"

Sandra: When there's an active violation happening like that: non-cooperation. And non-cooperation because something really hurtful has really happened to you, and it's important for you to take care of yourself in that moment. I would recommend that you invite other people into your reality and share with them what's been going on with you and ask them to support you and meeting your needs, whatever those needs may be. Should you choose to do something about that person, it's better to go back in there into that conversation when you have rebranded yourself in your natural wholeness, in your inherent self-worth, and you have back-up, and you have support from other people, so you're not alone in doing this.

If you choose to not have a conversation with the other person who's bullying you, that is also your right. It may not be safe to. There may be repercussions that you don't want to risk. The point is to listen to yourself, and that's what non-cooperation means. It gives you that time to separate so that you can listen and take care of yourself, because if you stay in that situation, then there's more coming at you, and there's wounds being inflicted. So even if it's just for a little bit of time. Because whatever the situation might be, when you feel like you're not in a place where it's not something that you feel is a move you can make for whatever reason – because that happens, there are a ton of repercussions potentially depending on the situation – but this is why it's even more important to continue to listen to yourself and invite other people to understand your reality and gather their support so that your situation can change and so that you have greater ability to make a different move.

Josette: That's it for all the questions in the chat. Folks are welcome to add more to the chat or go ahead and just talk.

Sandra: Is anything not clear about that? It's oftentimes more clear in theory than it is in practice though. We're going to take a break for five minutes and then we'll come back and we're going to try and do it. It's going to be difficult because we don't have a person in front of us, but we're going to try our best to visualize.

Come back at 7:05 or whatever :05 it is for you over there.

Let me think of something else to talk about while we wait for other people to show up. You all have any questions about something?

Compassion Activist: I have a question. You said something about, “Yes, but...” Is that like, “Yes, but” is not helpful, so maybe we should try, “Yes, and”?

Sandra: Right. So give me an example where you feel stuck, where you feel stuck between a hard place and a rock, and put it into a, “Yes, but” statement.

Compassion Activist: “Yes, I understand why you think I’m wrong...” I should probably change that to, “Yes, I understand where you’re coming from, and here’s where I’m coming from.”

Sandra: How does that feel for you? What’s different?

Compassion Activist: That feels more like the non-violent communication to say “yes, and” instead of “yes, but.” It feels more peaceful.

Sandra: And what about your sense of what’s possible? Do you feel stuck? Do you feel like you have possibilities? Do you feel no difference whatsoever?

Compassion Activist: You know this activism is such a harder thing to have any type of victories or feel any types of success. The rewards are so minute and sometimes I feel so far apart. Sometimes I feel like I’m beating my head on a brick wall.

Sandra: So if we focus on this current moment only, in the statement that you made of, “Yes, but...” say it again. Physical sentence that you had.

Compassion Activist: “Okay, yes, I hear you’re coming from, but here’s where you’re wrong,” is probably my go-to position.

Sandra: What is the movement that you feel there? What is the possibility of action that you feel there?

Compassion Activist: “Yes, but you are wrong,” is totally feeding my anger, which I kind of like my anger. My anger gives me a voice.

Sandra: Try to say, “Yes, and” now.

Compassion Activist: “Yes, and here’s how I feel. Here’s how I see it.” That kind of ties back into checking in on myself, taking care of myself, inquiring about, “Why do I feel this way?” seems a little less confrontational. Feels a little more vulnerable. Feels like a more productive way to handle things.

Sandra: And how do you feel about your voice?

Compassion Activist: I like my voice.

Sandra: Do you feel like you have a voice? Because I know with the, “Yes, but” you liked that you felt you had a voice with it. What about with the, “Yes, and”?

Compassion Activist: “Yes, and” feels like my voice is softer and gentler which I’m not sure if that’s really going to help with my anger. You know? Anger is a motivator for me, and I’m not ready to give it up. I’ll just tell you that. I’m just not ready to give it up.

Sandra: Right. I never asked you to give it up. (laughs)

Compassion Activist: (laughs) Right. So, “Yes, but” is my anger. “Yes, and” I need to think that’s the non-violent communication style that’s going to help me change the world.

Sandra: But what’s the impact of saying, “Yes, but” vs. the impact of “Yes, and” for you?

Compassion Activist: Again, my anger. Toxic swirl. My anger and toxic swirl are like best buddies.

Sandra: Right, and what is the impact on you?

Compassion Activist: It’s really stressful and it’s bad for my health. Literally.

Sandra: And how effective is it in engaging the conversation with the other person?

Compassion Activist: That fist-bumping thing that you do, mine hits harder than yours.

Sandra: In terms of the, “Yes, and,” what is the impact on you?

Compassion Activist: Well, I have to practice it to see what it’s going to be. But I can imagine that it can give me more strength and more clarity and more conviction, because one thing I do learn from debating with people is that I verbally get to think about what I’m saying and I get to dig deeper into the reasons and my convictions get stronger, and it’s good practice for me. My vision becomes clearer as I’m respectfully debating other people. “Yes, and,” I’m going to get tattooed on my forehead.

Sandra: And it’s probably going to be more effective. Anger can be a harness and a motivator to get stuff done. And that’s why I say there’s no right or wrong to, “What is the impact?” Anger can be used as a harness and channeled, the impact of it is you get going. You get stuff done. I like that impact. Now when anger is uncontrolled though and it takes you over, what happens is that our reptilian part of our brain takes over, and it goes into, “fight, flight, freeze.” So like

you said, it does not see as clearly. You see people go red with rage. This is why when people fight, they taunt each other in the beginning. They try to get each other riled up, because once you get the other person worked up, they're not going to be able to fight very well because they're going to be throwing wild blows, and they're not going to be thinking. They're just going to be reacting. They're not going to be able to see exactly what they're doing and responding kindly. They can't anticipate. They can't act in the moment. So it's not as effect.

And including the stress hormones that flood your body when you get that kind of uncontrollable stress, and frustration, anger. That's bad for your health if you do it all the time. So it's like I said, there's no right or wrong. Feelings are what they are. Anger is what it is. Sadness, frustration, it is what it is. It's cold outside. It's sunny outside. It is what it is. What is the impact on you? What do you choose to do about it?

It all comes from pain, so when pain happens, we have a choice. We can either choose fear, and along with fear comes all this other stuff where you run away from them and get in toxic swirl and brings all this other stuff that's not good for us, not healthy for us, we're not constructive... or, we can choose, when we're in the presence of pain, we can choose compassion for ourselves. You all notice in the coaching, and hopefully as you've been practicing yourself, when you get compassion, when you get presence to your own pain, you see a need, you take care of that need. That's increasing your well-being because you're actually taking care of yourself, and there's a sense of peace.

So like I said, there's no necessarily "right or wrong" to this, I'm not saying if you choose fear you're wrong for it. I'm just saying, what is the impact for you, and is that the impact you want?

So somebody else asked a question that said, "Can you be angry and motivated at the same time? Open to, 'Yes, and.'"

So I read somewhere is, "Be angry at the deed and do no harm to the person." So Everyday Feminism, this is basically our approach to it: we don't make people wrong as human beings for thinking the way they do. We understand that this is the world. The status quo is systemic oppression. We're not surprised that people think like this. Why would they think otherwise? That's what they've been taught our entire lives. The problem is our society is saturated with this, from the media, to our education, our textbooks... to our parents, to our families, to our teachers, to our friends, to our music industry... It's just everywhere. Once you see it, it's really everywhere. So why is it surprising that people believe it? Well because it's not what we think. But like I said: two different realities.

What you can see is how they're being hurt by it. People get trapped into gender boxes. They get trapped by patriarchy in the man box or the woman box. There's no trans box. There's no nonbinary box. You get pushed out of that.

They're not even allowed to have a box. So they get trapped in all these labels of who they're supposed to be instead of letting themselves be who they are, and there's tremendous pain in doing that. So yes, be angry at the box. Be angry at patriarchy. Be angry at white supremacy. Like, I need more angry at this world. That's what I'm trying to get people to be like. I'm not trying to go for more complacency. I'm not going for that. But be angry at the system that we've inherited. The people are just caught up in it. They're just pawns actually. But we have to get conscious of that so we can stop being a pawn, so we can be a mover and a shaker. And that's what we create together. We're trying to get people conscious through the conscious-raising inquiry and through sharing our reality, to give presence to something that's different that contradicts the systemic oppressions that were taught to them so they can make a choice. They make a choice with you when they co-create something.

So the whole plan is really to understand. This is about understanding. It's not about trying to make something happen. It's about understanding where we're coming from, where the other person is coming from. Because what happens when we seek to understand each other? We recognize each other's humanities. What does systemic oppression teach us? To deny each other's humanities.

We do that all the time as activists. Don't think that we don't. We look at people who are less socially conscious than we are, and we judge and we shame and we get mad at their existence, and we deny their humanity. We don't care about why they think the way they do, the pain it's causing them... there's a reason why in this country: who has the highest rate of suicide? Men do. We tell them they can't have feelings. So when they do have feelings, they lash out through violence, or they lash inwards, through suicide.

So it's really about acknowledging that people have feelings, people have experiences, people have needs, people have pain. This is what humanity is, when we recognize each other's humanities. So seeking to understand: 1) is the respectful thing to do, and 2) it's really the only way we're going to stop systemic oppression perpetuating that dynamic. Once we get together, once we get to understanding, we actually stop this hitting up against each other business [punching fists together] and we start – touching – for the transcript, I'm now putting my palms together. This is what we got. [putting palms together]

So I'm going to have us to an exercise. Yay, exercise! So I want people to close their eyes, get comfortable. Close your eyes. I want you to take a couple of deep breaths. Breathe in...now breathe out. Breathe in...breathe out. Breathe in...breathe out.

I want you to recall the situation that you're using for today's session. I want you to think about what happened. What did they say and what did they do? What did you say, what did you do, if anything?

So just think about it. Your toxic swirl is coming up, that's okay. This is the entry point. I want you to notice where you're feeling the sensations in your bodies. I want you to put your hand on it. So where are you feeling the reaction, the emotional charge...put your hand on your body where it is, where it feels strongest. I want you to notice. I don't want you to change anything. I just want you to notice. What does it look like? Does it move? How big is it? Does it have a color? Just kind of notice. Just notice what's going on and the sensations that are going on inside of you. Really visualize it, or feel it depending on how you receive it. Pay attention, and I want you to taking your hand where you feel it strongest, to breathe in, and say, "I see you," breathe out, "I see you." Breathe in, "I see you." Breathe out, "I see you."

I want you to just notice what's coming up for you. Maybe nothing's changed. Maybe there's a shift. Notice how it's different or the same. Keeping your hand on the spot, breathe in, "I see you." Breathe out, "I care." Breathe in, "I see you." Breathe out, "I care."

Just notice again. Notice if there are shifts, or maybe not. Then, keeping your hand there, ask it, "What do you need? What can I give you?" Maybe it says something, maybe not. If you receive something, acknowledge that you have not been doing it, and if you choose to do it, to give them what it needs, say that. "I acknowledge that I haven't been doing this, and I commit to doing it."

And if nothing's come up for you in terms of a need, go back to saying, "I see you, and I care." And repeat.

I want you to thank it for sharing, and that now you're going to take care of it, and take care of that situation. I want you to take a couple of deep breaths. Breathe in. Breathe out. Breathe in. Breathe out. Breathe in. Breathe out. Wiggle your hands, your toes. Stretch. Open your eyes, and come back.

Maybe something came up for you. Maybe nothing did. It was a quick little exercise, but I wanted to make sure that everyone got practice with doing this.

So I want folks to put in a chat box how that was for them, if they learned anything from it. We're going to do this every session. We have one more session so we'll do it definitely in the next one. And in the next training, I'm going to do them in the Q&A's. We'll start with them.

So some people found forgiveness. People found stress. A lot of anger, which normally tries to suppress, so it's hard to say, "I care about you" and mean it.

And if you find it hard to say, "I care about you," then go back to saying, "I see you." If you're not there, don't force it. Caring about it is a natural feeling that arises. You can't force "care," but you can focus on seeing it. Instead of focusing

on toxic swirl, you focus on seeing it. Be mindful to what's going on inside of you.

I had to speed this along, obviously, because it's a group thing. If I was doing this one-on-one, you notice that sometimes I go faster. Sometimes I go slower. It just depends on how the person is. If, "I care" was too soon, stick to, "I see you."

Somebody found satisfaction seeing how they are already respecting themselves and got a greater inner joy in that space for committing.

Somebody has done a little work with family systems theory, they're overjoyed to be heard from and cared about.

"Sounds very doable, what we just did."

"It's a huge step for me to see and spend time with my internal reality and acknowledge it."

"Come to terms with the depression I've been neglecting."

"Going back to acknowledging the needs toward my feelings."

You kind of want to think about these feelings as almost like wild animals. You have to coax out, keep showing up, putting out food, the food being your intention. I run the Everyday Self-Love course -- which we've actually stop providing support services, but the modules are still available for folks, and some of you are actually in that course as well -- and we talk about the inner-child. That's another step that can take us further, is personifying that pain as an inner child. You notice how I ask you to have a conversation with them, and they respond? They're full characters and they have responses and everything? I can't tell you why this works, but inner-child works. It can be a lot easier for us to work with the hurt child inside of us rather than ourselves. We beat ourselves up a lot more.

Now that you're in this place, hopefully you've been moved in some way after getting in touch with your pain. If not, the practice is really about acknowledging. Just keep on acknowledging, and naturally let compassion and care arise. Sometimes it takes awhile. Sometimes it takes showing up multiple times, like I said, it's like coaxing a wild animal, sometimes you have to show up multiple times with food, a.k.a. your intention, acknowledgment. And then time will come to trust you and will start sharing with you over time.

I want folks from this place now to think to that conversation -- that they maybe didn't have -- in that situation with the other person: think about that conversation again. What would you like to share?

So I want you to type in that chat box, what would you like to share? If you had that person right in front of you, what would you like to share with them? What does your pain want to share?

“I’m tired and deflated.”

Remember, there’s no right or wrong to this. Your reality is what it is.

“That I matter.”

“That I can’t be for them what they need and want me to be.”

“That I belong.”

“I’ve been spreading myself too thin.”

“Your inconsideration was hurtful and selfish.”

It’s important that when you’re talking, when you’re sharing your reality, that’s what you’re doing, and you acknowledge it as such.

“This is what I’m experiencing.” “I’ve had enough.” “That was really hurtful to me.”

When you acknowledge what’s been going on with you, as your own internal experience, and you say, “That was really hurtful to me. What was going on with you?” you inquire into their internal reality.

I hope that as we’ve been talking about this, you’re starting to be able to perceive people’s possible realities. That’s what happens when you take care of your own pain. It stops taking up so much space because it’s healed. The wound is closing up. Your ability to perceive what’s going on with the other person grows, and you’ll notice this.

Me, for example, when somebody tells me somebody is quote unquote “acting out,” first thing I go to is, “They must be in a lot of pain.”

I had a friend telling me that they were online dating and they had been talking about this woman, and right before he was going to go and visit her, she told him that she was actually a man. He had been afraid to say that he was a man because he’s a gay man and he was still working a lot out and he wanted my friend to come over, and he was hoping that even though my friend said he was straight that they can do something because they connected via OkCupid.

A lot of people would react to that being judgmental, and I reacted to that being like, "He must be so insecure and being in lots of pain about the fact that he's gay." You start seeing the pain behind people's behaviors. That's what you get with this practice. Now that's a guess, but it's probably a good one though.

So as you do this work, you'll be able to start seeing that, and you can check in and say, "Hey, so is that's what's going on for you?"

In another example, somebody I know was being pretty viciously personally attacked in this activist community space, and she was somebody who my friend had been supporting quite a lot. But there was some sort of conflict that happened, and so this person started really talking to a lot of people how horrible and terrible and enabling my friend was. When I heard that, the first thing that occurred to me was, "She must've felt really betrayed." Maybe, I don't know for sure. What occurred to me was she probably felt so betrayed because my friend had been so supportive of her and that they disagreed about this one thing that was really important to the other person, and that would explain how much of a lashing out she was doing against my friend.

This is a perspective my friend didn't have at that point, because she was caught up in the fact that "I had helped her so much and she's coming back to me with all this." It's actually because you helped her so much that she's coming back at you with all this.

You start being able to pick up what's going on with other folks. You can just ask. That's the shortcut way of doing it, but as you practice, you start to get a lot more insight into other people.

So let's have folks speculate what could've been the other person's pain, the source of their reaction. Remember, that can be ignorance, unconscious privilege, their own pain and trauma, misunderstanding, cultural differences... there's lots of reasons why people do what they do that makes total sense to them and makes no sense to us.

Just take a moment to speculate. What could be behind their reaction if you were able to unpack it with them.

"Fear of rejection and feeling unworthy." Very common.

"They don't want me to be sad or stuck." That's really common.

It's interesting, when I lost my wallet, my grandma's response was, "That's your fault that you lost it, you should've paid more attention." So that's a small thing, but my family has a pattern of doing stuff like that, of being kind of more victim-blaming, and that's her way of trying to help me out. They don't want me to lose that. When I said the same thing about somebody who had been controlling of

me, they said that that was a line that I had allowed them to cross, because they didn't want me to have that happen again.

A lot of the times, our families, our loved ones are trying to "help us out." They're just doing it in terrible ways.

"Fear for their own position."

"Loss and abandonment and hurt."

"Loss of control."

You have a lot of pain and trauma and fear. So does everybody else. You're not the only one. That's really important. I want that to sink in. Every single person, who's not open, who's not even willing to consider what you're saying, willing to consider the conversation, that's coming from a place of pain and suffering. Why? Because the future is unknown. The future that anything is possible, so if we're afraid of something in the future, it's because we have some pain in the past that we don't want to repeat. So if they're not willing to even consider the possibility of something, that's going to be pain.

Oftentimes when we see these people, we see them as these powerful monolithic people because they've hurt us. They're like giants. We can't do anything against them. They're just in pain, too...which does not excuse their behavior. We can have feelings, like the weather. No right or wrong to it. We all have pain, we all have fear, we all have trauma. And as I've been saying, acknowledging your feelings is one thing. What you choose to do about them, is completely different your choice and your responsibility. You are responsible for handling it, for expressing it, for taking care of it. If you dismiss it, you minimize it, you lash out, that is your responsibility, and that is two completely separate things.

You can acknowledge somebody's reality and their pain, and say that you are still responsible for your behavior, just like you are.

What happens when I have low emotional energy, when the capacity goes down? I get real serious. Shit got deep.

Now that we're here, I want folks to stay in those imaginary situations. You've reconnected. They got in touch with your pain. You got in touch with their pain. Naturally arises: compassion. Now we're in a place where you care about each other and I want you to type in, what is the shared value, or interest, or goal?

I know you're just making stuff up, just speculating. Later you can check in on them, but for right now, just speculate.

“That we love each other and want the best for ourselves.” How many fights with couples start out with, “I’m trying to show my love for you, and you didn’t receive it as love, and now I’m upset that you didn’t receive it as love”? That happens a lot. And then that person gets upset that we’re upset, and they don’t want us to be upset because they love us, and now we’re both upset because we love each other. That’s wild, sometimes, the things that we do.

“Other people want respect and self-determination. They just want to be happy.”

“Value each other as women.”

“We have the same wants and fears.”

“Caring about young people, wanting them to be happy.”

“We want to help people find ways to move forward.”

I want you to do the, “Yes, but.” So take your old perspective, say “Yes,” your perspective, “but” probably my perspective. So this will be the old place. So type that in.

“Yes, I know you think that’s a good thing, but I think that’s messed up,” something like that.

People say it doesn’t feel right to do that right now. Yeah, you’re in a different space. You see that? You’re in a different space so that’s actually really hard to do and that’s actually really good.

So it’s all about how you’re being that it flows from.

Okay, so we’ll do a, “Yes, and.” So, “Yes,” their perspective, “and” my perspective. So let’s do Y together.

“Yes, you’re feeling scared and worried about being unworthy, and I’m running on empty and don’t have much to give.”

“Yes, I’ve had a lot of sexy times for us, which made me feel more sexier for them making sure I was ready.”

“Yes, I don’t want to feel inferior/oppressed, and you don’t want to be oppressive.”

That was actually an accident that when I said, “Yes, but,” and folks were like, “That doesn’t feel right.” That’s great. I didn’t intend for that to happen, because I wanted to highlight that this is a practice. You can’t theorize this. You have to do it. Remember when I went Yoda on you all. And Yoda said, “Don’t try, just

do.” And I was like, “Don’t try. Don’t even try. Don’t even do. Just be.” And you can only “be” when you shift. You shift by going deep and getting present.

“Yes, you’re afraid of your potentially oppressive opinions, and I believe it’s possible to value life, and body autonomy in a way that’s not oppressive. So let’s focus on the information and how to help people better understand the nuance.”

“You don’t want to be violent. I don’t want you to be violent.”

“I know you want me to move, and I don’t feel ready for that, so how are we going to try to explore what this means and how we can help each other?”

So when folks find that when you come to a shared value, how easy is it to create something, a shared vision, together, once they identify the shared value? People can type in the chat box.

“It comes naturally.”

“Surprisingly simple.”

“Easier than before.”

Once again, this is not about trying. You’re being. People had to struggle to think about “yes, but” because they’re in this space. When you want to get here and you’re struggling to get to this point of shared envisioning, you’re struggling to get to a place where you’re co-creating a solution together, you’re stuck. There’s no right or wrong to that. It just means you just have to pause and dig deep within yourself. Once you’ve gone through practice one through four, it flows. There’s a method to all of this. I’m not just making this up. It works.

Okay, now you’ve co-created something, and guess what? You did it without the person even being in front of you. You can practice this by yourself. Visualization. Athletes are taught to do this all the time. Coaches have them practicing shooting hoops or throwing the football, whatever they do, and it really impacts their real-life ability to play that sport. Like I said before, your mind creates what your body responds to. That’s why I say, “Choose what you focus on.” Your body will naturally follow.

Focus on pain, compassion will arise. Don’t try to force compassion. Just shift your focus. When you’re caught up in the toxic swirl, you don’t even need to talk to that person. It may not be appropriate. It may not be safe. There may be risk involved. Maybe you’re just not ready for that. You can still have the conversation in your head. It’ll still have that impact on your body.

You keep practicing that, that’s a groove that you’re cutting that’s going deeper and deeper and deeper, so this is going to be habit after awhile.

For me, my ability to see people's pain is like this sometimes [snaps fingers]. If I'm in a good place, I just walk around making everybody cry because I can see their pain and I name it literally via email via text, Josette labeled me as "the cry-maker." You have no idea.

I want to leave this here for you all. This is what's possible, what you are feeling. I want to do a screen share of the whiteboard.

I want folks to either type in the chat box or in the whiteboard what you're feeling right now. It can be anything. It doesn't have to be calm. It doesn't have to be peace or motivation. It can be stress. It can be anger. Whatever you want it to be, there's no right or wrong to this.

"Enlightened."

"Less stressed and lighter."

"Hope."

"Deflated."

"Blank."

"Peaceful."

"Processing."

If people on telephone want to share, you can as well. Star-six.

"Determined."

"There's some escalation in me in wanting to kick ass, but there's also more able to share here and say what is more to the point instead of just angry garbage."

"Adjusting."

"Love."

"This was a really mellow session. So helpful."

"Small but afraid to take it to real-life."

If you're afraid to take it to real-life, take it to your internal reality. Just practice it in your home, you can just practice it. You don't have to go out and do it right now.

Josette: I also got an anonymous message saying, “My body was hella tired and in pain a couple of hours ago and now I feel chill.”

Sandra: So that’s another interesting thing about this. A lot of our stress and physical manifestations to our stress is due to our resistance to reality. We don’t want to acknowledge something, we don’t want to be like, “That’s what’s going on.” We fight it. “No, it can’t be raining. How can it be raining? Why am I getting wet?” “I can’t believe this person did this. Why do they do this? Why does this always happen to me? Why do I keep taking it?” Instead of being like, “Hey this is what happened. What is the impact on me? Where is it hurting?”

When you get present and you stop resisting, you will often find that a lot of that charge goes away, because the charge is not necessarily about the situation. It’s oftentimes about our resistance.

“Small but strong.”

“I feel compassion working.”

This is just a sampling of what’s possible of you all if you keep practicing. I want folks in these last few minutes to type in what their main takeaway will be. What is their main takeaway? If they can remember one thing, what would it be?

“Yes, and.”

“I see you.”

“Your voice in my head, Yoda. Yes.”

I have a friends who say to me that they sometimes say, “What would Sandra do?”

“That all the suffering feel pain.”

“That there is no right or wrong. There is just coming together and co-creating.”

“That compassion does not arise naturally. There’s usually something, pain, in the way.”

“What would Sandra do?”

“I can give myself space to face things first on my own.”

This is really important because we obviously have two hours together, so remember this energy, remember this moment, this experience, because you can

recreate at any time that you want. If you're struggling, you can watch the videos again, and you have free coaching sessions with me for free, up to three. And you can all just take the next course. It's free for you all. It's bimonthly sessions. Just saying.

Someone's asking for the quote. "Be angry at the deed, and do no harm to the person."

Someone asked if the videos will always be available for us to go back to? Yeah, you can access it at any point, so that login is just going to be there. Some of the active services at one point may stop because things evolve for us – like for Everyday Self-Love, I stopped providing group discussions and coaching – but you still have access to the modules. That will always be there.

Somebody else wrote they're remembering, "It's okay to stay where 'I see you' vs. moving onto 'I care' until I'm ready." Very, very true.

If it feels like you need to drag yourself to the next place, don't drag yourself. Your body wants to pause. Stay there. Listen to it. Remember the other way of thinking about this is just breathe and listen. Take a moment. Notice that you're trying to drag yourself. Listen. What is going on underneath it? Breathe and listen.

The other quote is to invite. It's not a quote, it's just one word: invite. So remember those two things: breathe and listen, and invite. Invite them to share their reality; invite them to meet their reality. Everything flows from there. If you want to remember Yoda, that's bonus.

So thank you everybody for showing up. We have one more session. We're going to go over the compassionate non-cooperation, which is a pretty short thing, it'll be more of the same of, "No toxic swirl, acknowledging their humanity as we don't engage with them." So that'll be quick, and then we're going to take time to do some questions and some coaching. So come and keep practicing this throughout the week and see what happens and come with questions.

We will send you emails soon about session number eight, and then in the next few days hopefully also about session number nine. Once again, I apologize for the delay on session number eight. But I thank you again for showing up. Bye everybody.