



The Pathway to Compassion

Few people in our world, mostly the saints and sages among us, can simply open their hearts to someone who is being hostile towards them. However, for the rest of us there are some intermediate steps that lead us towards compassion during a difficult encounter. Ultimately, this path develops the capacity to love one's enemies. The pathway to compassion unfolds as follows.

- **Bravery leads to discovery:** By being courageous enough when feeling threatened to go beyond the instinctive fight or flight reaction, and respond instead by engaging to listen and learn, we begin to discover more about the person we are with—such as their perspective, their feelings and what this experience means to them.
- **Discovery leads to empathy:** The more we discover about another person, the easier it is to imagine what it is like to be in their shoes, and the more empathy we can have for them.
- **Empathy leads to compassion:** The more empathy we develop the easier it is to deeply connect and *be with* our fellow human beings, and the stronger and wider our circle of compassion grows.
- **Compassion leads to healing:** The more we practice compassion and weave it into our relationships, the stronger our partnerships in the service of healing become, and the more conducive the patients state-of-mind is towards healing. The stronger this magnetic flux of compassion, the better it holds people, families, teams and communities together.

