

Four Universal Principles of Compassion

These are eternal, universal principles that help us know one another in meaningful, graceful ways—where we dance with and discover each other instead of colliding and bouncing off surface appearances. They create the conditions that allow a person who is suffering to experience the healing power of compassion.

Attention – is the principle of *where you put your focus* – your undivided attention breaths life into whatever you focus on. It is the quality of your awareness that picks up the signals of what really matters. If you only focus on what’s wrong with people, you give life to that. If you focus on what they have going for them and what matters most to them, you bring that to life. Like the sun rising in the east, attention is a dawning that brings light and life into the parts of our world that have been in the dark all night.

- The principle of attention is: what we focus on, we breathe life into.

Acknowledgement – is the principle of *what you give voice to* – your faithful report of what you have witnessed – to literally confess the knowledge you gained by paying attention. It is the quality of the message you send. It can lift people up or tear them down. Positive messages of acknowledgment are buoyant, they let someone know that you appreciate them as a unique individual. Acknowledgment has a reflective quality similar to the feeling when the sun is setting in the west. Acknowledgment is the principle of the announcing what is good and true in life. It is the spirit of Namasté.

- The principle of acknowledgment is: what we give voice to, we affirm.



Affection is the principle of *how you touch people* – the human contact you make by getting close enough to touch someone’s life. It is the quality of your connectedness, the human touch of warmth, comfort, kindness and humor. Like the sun in the south at midday, affection is when our warmth is felt the strongest, as in those moments when we are wholehearted and befriend one another. Where we show affection we bring joy and healing.

- The principle of affection is: when we connect wholeheartedly, the current of compassion begins to flow.

Acceptance is the principle of *being with mystery* – how you stand at the edge of your understanding or at the beginning of a new experience, and regard what is beyond with equanimity. It is the quality of your presence in the face of the unknown, in the silence. Like the sun in the north at midnight, acceptance welcomes the mysteries of life and is at peace with who we are and where we are, right now. It is the spirit of Shalom.

- The principle of acceptance is: being at peace with the way things are allows them to change.

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