

Module 8.3

KINDNESS and COMPASSION for Students



TAKE IT DEEPER:

Who Deserves Compassion: The Compassion Continuum

When talking to students about compassion, we can explore the questions: Does everyone deserve compassion? What about people who commit crimes? Or people who are not so kind themselves? The following activity can spark this discussion.

Create a “Compassion continuum” on the floor, with markers from “No compassion” to “A lot of compassion”.

Pose these scenarios/people to your students and have them stand along the continuum to represent how much compassion they feel this person deserves.

- A classmate who forgot their lunch today
- A friend at school who was being bullied
- A bully who failed their math test
- A person who is a friend of your aunt who is on trial for theft
- A president of a company who cheats on their taxes and goes to jail
- An infant who bit their brother

After each example, pose some of the following questions (for students to discuss out loud or write quietly to themselves):

- Why do you think this person deserves or does not deserve compassion (depending where they stood)?
- Can you think of any reasons this person did what they did?
- Does that make you change your mind about how much compassion we should show them?
- Could this person do anything to earn more compassion, in your mind? Does a person have to “earn” compassion, or are we all deserving of it regardless of what we’ve done in our lives?

Some Discussion points for the end of the activity:

Compassion for someone's humanity is not the same as “letting them off the hook” or approving of their actions. In the classroom in particular, we can allow all members of a conflict to have a voice and offer compassion for their own suffering that may have led them to their actions— but still hold students accountable for their actions. We can also allow space for people to do better next time.

