



Charter for Compassion

The principle of compassion lies at the heart of all religious, ethical and spiritual traditions, calling us always to treat all others as we wish to be treated ourselves. Compassion impels us to work tirelessly to alleviate the suffering of our fellow creatures, to dethrone ourselves from the centre of our world and put another there, and to honour the inviolable sanctity of every single human being, treating everybody, without exception, with absolute justice, equity and respect.

It is also necessary in both public and private life to refrain consistently and empathically from inflicting pain. To act or speak violently out of spite, chauvinism, or self-interest, to impoverish, exploit or deny basic rights to anybody, and to incite hatred by denigrating others—even our enemies—is a denial of our common humanity. We acknowledge that we have failed to live compassionately and that some have even increased the sum of human misery in the name of religion.

We therefore call upon all men and women ~ to restore compassion to the centre of morality and religion ~ to return to the ancient principle that any interpretation of scripture that breeds violence, hatred or disdain is illegitimate ~ to ensure that youth are given accurate and respectful information about other traditions, religions and cultures ~ to encourage a positive appreciation of cultural and religious diversity ~ to cultivate an informed empathy with the suffering of all human beings—even those regarded as enemies.

We urgently need to make compassion a clear, luminous and dynamic force in our polarized world. Rooted in a principled determination to transcend selfishness, compassion can break down political, dogmatic, ideological and religious boundaries. Born of our deep interdependence, compassion is essential to human relationships and to a fulfilled humanity. It is the path to enlightenment, and indispensable to the creation of a just economy and a peaceful global community.

Why a Charter for Compassion?

The Charter for Compassion is a cooperative effort to restore not only compassionate thinking, but more importantly, compassionate action to the centre of religious, moral and political life. Compassion is about putting ourselves in the shoes of the other. It lies at the heart of all religious and ethical systems.

The charter seeks to bring the word compassion into public and private discourse, making it clear that any ideology that breeds hatred or contempt (be it religious or secular) is unacceptable. It seeks to build a global community where men and women of all races, nations and ideologies can live together in peace.

The charter is not simply a statement of principle; it is above all a summons to creative practical and sustained action to meet the political, moral, religious, social and cultural concerns of our time. We are each invited to adopt the charter as our own, to make a lifelong commitment to live with compassion.

The Charter was involved a multi-faith effort by members of the five major religions including the three Abraham faiths; Judaism, Christianity and Islam. The idea was initiated by Karen Armstrong, and launched internationally on 12 November 2009.

What the charter does and does not do

The organisers point out that the charter does not assume that all religions are the same, that compassion is the only thing that matters in religion, or that religious people have a monopoly on compassion. Instead it emphasises that the Golden rule ('do to others as you would have them do to you') is our primary duty and cannot be limited to our own political, religious or ethnic group. It asserts that in our divided world, compassion The Charter for Compassion is a global collaborative document involving the participation of many people from around the world.

Further information: www.charterforcompassion.com