

CHANGE THROUGH COMPASSION

There is for many a well-established pattern of cruelty and a lack of kindness which forms part of the human response when we are unable to fulfil our own expectations, hopes and dreams. The tragedy of this response is that it is not human at all. It is inhumane, a by-product of anger, ignorance and an absence of clear thinking. How can it be right to torture oneself for not having met one's own needs and expectations? Especially when the reason for this is often a lack of knowledge, power and resources? Surely if we are unable to do something as a result of 'lacking' in some way, the most appropriate response is compassion and understanding. The absence of compassion leads to us being stuck in vicious, self-defeating cycles. The cycle often begins with trying to overcome something that enslaves us and then failing, either because we have not understood the process, or we've needed something more to enable us to successfully execute the task. As a result of this perceived failure, we lash out at ourselves and become crippled by our impatience and insensitivity. The feelings of failure then become hopelessness, despair and even depression, all of which breed doubt, self-pity and fear. The consequence of this is an inability to adequately meet the next challenge and without a different approach, we are almost certain to repeat the cycle again.

Compassion is made up of sensitivity, warmth, awareness, tenderness, insight, knowledge and care. It gently feels its way through the tragedy and trauma of the individual, carefully crafting a reasonable and positive pathway through the rubble of uncertainty and despondency. It enables the individual to salvage something from what seems unsalvageable, so that the rubble of fallen hopes and dreams becomes the foundation of a promised land. So, starting from today, try not to brutalise yourself any further. Your brutality only serves to fracture and weaken your self-respect, self-confidence and self-belief. Banish the cruelty that keeps you enslaved to the past and to your mistakes. Understand that freedom begins in the mind, so free yourself from the idea that you are only worthy of being punished and entertain the notion that it is through care and consideration that you are able to become the very best you, you can be. Change through the soothing balm of compassion because the alternative is to choke on your cruelty. Ask yourself, what have you achieved with your constant criticism and countless crucifixions? Are you any further along the road of contentment, peace of mind and happiness? If not, maybe it's time to try offering yourself the hand of kindness.

Changing through compassion is not about letting oneself off the hook nor is it the denial of what needs to be faced and resolved. On the contrary, it is a courageous choice. It takes a great deal of effort to swim against the tide of beating up on oneself. After all, that is a response which for many of us now comes without thought and effort. Don't get caught up in the illusion that it is only when you suffer that you are entitled to any positive gains. The idea 'where there is no pain there is no gain' does not tell the whole story of personal growth. There are indeed times where feeling your pain offers liberation and healing but equally, times when the nursing of that pain, the gentle caressing of that wound and the medication of love and care is what is needed for healing and recovery. So, when you next feel tempted to berate yourself for not having risen to your ideals, having fallen short of your expectations, pause for a moment and ask yourself, is it better that I batter and beat myself into submission, causing further damage and injury or might I actually achieve what I hope for with the tonic of love? I am sure you will find through your own experience that change comes easiest through compassion.