

# A CALL TO BE KIND

## THE COMPASSIONATE CLASSROOM: A TOOLKIT FOR TEACHERS

For students between the  
ages of 6 and 12 years old

[#CompassionConnects](#)

[MentalHealthWeek.ca](http://MentalHealthWeek.ca)

## Contents

Introduction.....	3
CMHA Mental Health Week.....	3
Defining Compassion .....	4
How Children Benefit from Compassion.....	4
Activity 1 – Build a Chain of Kindness.....	5
Activity 2 – Host Kindness Bingo.....	6
Activity 3 – Compassion Journal.....	8
How You Can Inspire Compassion.....	9
The Importance of Self-Compassion.....	9

## Introduction

Dear Teachers,

We want to take a moment to express our deep admiration for the incredible work you do every day. Your dedication, passion, and tireless efforts greatly impact the lives of the children you teach. You are the unsung heroes shaping the future, instilling not only knowledge but also values that will guide the next generation. Amid ongoing changes, we acknowledge the challenges you face and emphasize the significance of your role in fostering a knowledgeable and compassionate society.

As a small token of our appreciation, we have created a toolkit to support your invaluable work in nurturing young minds. We hope it enhances your ability to inspire kindness and wisdom in the adults of tomorrow.

Thank you for being amazing educators and making a lasting difference in the world.

## CMHA Mental Health Week

This year's Mental Health Week is centered on the healing power of compassion. While suffering is unavoidable – for adults and children alike – we emphasize that kindness is equally intrinsic to our humanity. Everyone can learn and practice compassion, and we know that doing so can make an enormous difference in our lives and communities.

From May 6 to 12, 2024, join us in celebrating Mental Health Week by embracing *A Call to Be Kind* in your classroom. Because compassion connects us all.

## Defining Compassion

Compassion can be defined as the acknowledgement of suffering, coupled with a profound desire to alleviate it.<sup>1</sup>

Alternative definitions tailored to younger students:

- Compassion is when we are kind and help ourselves and our friends when needed. It is about doing nice things that make everyone feel happy and loved.
- Compassion is when we feel kindness and want to help those who are going through a tough time. It is about caring and wanting to make a positive difference by showing understanding and support.

**TIP:** Facilitate a conversation with your students about compassion. Ask them if they have heard of compassion before and if so, what it means to them. Encourage them to share examples of both kind and unkind actions. Explore how they feel when they are compassionate towards themselves or others.

**Note:** See our resource on defining compassion and its origins for more details.

## How Children Benefit from Compassion

In today's complex world, social conflicts, exclusion, bullying, violence, depression, loneliness, anxiety, stress, and difficulties concentrating are often part of children's lives.<sup>2</sup> The repercussions of these challenges can pose great risks to their health and well-being. As a result, there is an increasing focus on nurturing socio-emotional skills in childhood, with promising outcomes.<sup>3</sup> Research shows that nurturing caring behaviours, such as compassion, among children in educational settings can help mitigate their psychological distress and stress, while encouraging positive relationships and emotional regulation.<sup>4</sup>

## Activity 1 Build a Chain of Kindness

### OBJECTIVE

Cultivate a culture of compassion in your classroom by crafting a kindness chain on the wall. This visual representation serves as inspiration, encouragement, and motivation for compassionate actions. The growing chain demonstrates the powerful ripple effect that a single act of kindness can trigger.

### MATERIALS

Paper, scissors, glue

### STEPS

- 1** Distribute strips of paper to serve as individual links of the kindness chain.
- 2** Whenever a student demonstrates an act of kindness towards themselves or others, encourage them to add a link to the chain.
- 3** Lead a reflective discussion about the contagious nature of compassion. You can emphasize how individual actions accumulate over time to create a visually striking and meaningful chain of kindness. This activity not only encourages positive behavior but also reinforces the idea that every act, no matter how small, contributes to the creation of a beautiful tapestry of kindness in the classroom.

*Note: This activity is well-suited for younger children as it offers a tangible and engaging experience to grasp the concept of kindness and its cumulative effect. For older students, you could encourage them to further reflect by writing down the action taken on the piece of paper before adding it to the chain.*



## Activity 2 Host Kindness Bingo

### OBJECTIVE

Foster a culture of kindness within your classroom through an interactive Kindness Bingo game. This activity encourages students to actively engage in acts of kindness throughout the school week.

### MATERIALS

Kindness Bingo boards (duplicated for each student), markers or crayons

### STEPS

- 1** Create a Kindness Bingo board (or print the one on the following page) and duplicate it for each student in the class.
- 2** Challenge students to achieve a “bingo” by completing five acts of kindness (one per day) during the school week.
- 3** After completing an action, students can colour or mark the corresponding space on their bingo board.
- 4** Lead a discussion about the positive impact of compassion and how it contributes to creating a supportive and caring classroom.

*Note: This interactive activity is adaptable and may be suitable for various age groups. It provides a fun and meaningful way for students to actively participate in spreading kindness.*

## Classroom Kindness Bingo

<p><b>Compliment a classmate</b></p> 	<p><b>Read your favourite book</b></p> 	<p><b>Journal or draw about how you are feeling</b></p> 	<p><b>Hold the door open for someone</b></p> 
<p><b>Tidy your desk or locker</b></p> 	<p><b>Take five deep breaths</b></p> 	<p><b>Let someone go before you in line</b></p> 	<p><b>Play with someone new during recess</b></p> 
<p><b>Say “hi” to someone new</b></p> 	<p><b>Write a kind note to someone</b></p> 	<p><b>Sharpen someone’s pencil</b></p> 	<p><b>Ask someone for help</b></p> 
<p><b>Draw a picture for someone</b></p> 	<p><b>Repeat to yourself “I am enough” five times</b></p> 	<p><b>Share school supplies</b></p> 	<p><b>Listen or dance to your favourite song</b></p> 

## Activity 3 Compassion Journal

### OBJECTIVE

The objective of the Compassion Journal is to cultivate a habit of recognizing and appreciating compassionate actions. Through regular reflection, students will develop a deeper understanding of compassion and its positive impact on themselves and the classroom.

### MATERIALS

Small notebooks or journals for each student (or paper), pens or pencils

### STEPS

- 1** Distribute notebooks or journals to each student. Encourage students to personalize their journals to help them connect to the activity.
- 2** Explain the concept of the Compassion Journal: students are to record acts of kindness they witness or perform, along with a brief description of the situation. Emphasize that acts of kindness can be both big and small, and they can occur inside or outside the classroom.
- 3** Allocate a few minutes each day for students to reflect on their entries and share them with a partner or in small groups. Students should discuss how these acts of kindness have influenced their feelings and interactions within the class.
- 4** Towards the end of the week, facilitate a more extensive reflection session where students review their Compassion Journals. Discuss any patterns or trends they noticed and how the activity has impacted their perspective on compassion.

*Note: While journaling may be more suitable for older students, this activity can be modified for younger students. For instance, you could facilitate a reflective conversation with your younger students or ask them to draw compassionate actions. During the discussion, you could share stories or images that are compassionate. You could also read a book on compassion and discuss the outcome with your students.*

## How You Can Inspire Compassion

As a teacher, you play a pivotal role in shaping not just minds but hearts, knowing well that children learn most effectively through imitation. Here are some tangible suggestions for you to model compassion for your students:

- Welcome each student warmly as they enter your classroom.
- Acknowledge your students' specific achievements, whether it is their inventive ideas, exceptional word selection, or impressive mathematical abilities.
- Recognize and highlight every act of kindness observed in your classroom, creating a positive and appreciative atmosphere.
- Engage with your students by inquiring about their experiences outside of school, prompting discussions about their weekend activities and allowing them to share their personal stories.

## The Importance of Self-Compassion

It seems common sense that we should all take care of ourselves. Yet, when you are used to devoting significant time and energy to supporting others, self-care can easily be forgotten. While we recognize that your role comes with increasingly complex challenges, as the final activity of this toolkit, we encourage you to prioritize and nourish your own self-compassion practice. Research has shown that cultivating self-compassion is an effective strategy for teachers to alleviate stress and enhance resilience.<sup>6</sup> While it will not solve systemic issues, this practice can help nurture and protect your mental health.

Practicing self-compassion does not have to be complicated. Consider simple strategies such as taking a few deep breaths throughout the day or going for a walk in your favourite park. Alternatively, take a moment to recognize the challenges you face and celebrate your resilience in creating a positive learning environment for your students.

*Note: See our resource on self-compassion for more details and examples.*



1 Kappelmayer, M., Czar, A., Tresca, M., D'Adamo, P., & Lozada, M. (2023). A school intervention promotes compassion, empathy and social relationships in children. *School Psychology International*, 44(5), 515-532. <https://doi.org/10.1177/01430343221145668>

Lozada M., D'Adamo P., Fuentes M. (2011). Intrinsic benefits of human altruism. *Journal of Theoretical Biology*, 289, 12–16. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.brunel.ac.uk/10.1016/j.jtbi.2011.08.016>

2 Moyano N., Ayllón E., Antoñanzas J. L., Cano J. (2019). Children's social integration and low perception of negative relationships as protectors against bullying and cyberbullying. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 10, 643. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.brunel.ac.uk/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.00643>

3 Flook L., Goldberg S. B., Pinger L., Davidson R. J. (2015). Promoting prosocial behavior and self-regulatory skills in preschool children through a mindfulness-based kindness curriculum. *Developmental Psychology*, 51(1), 44–51. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.brunel.ac.uk/10.1037/a0038256>

Carro N., D'Adamo P., Lozada M. (2020). An effective intervention can contribute to reducing perceived stress while promoting social integration in children. *EJREP*, 18(1), 183–201. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.brunel.ac.uk/10.25115/ejrep.v18i50.2600>

4 Potvin A. S., Penuel W. R., Dimidjian S., Jinpa T. (2022). Cultivating skillful means of care in schools through compassion practice and individual and joint inquiry. *Mindfulness*, 15, 1–17. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.brunel.ac.uk/10.1007/s12671-022-01867-x>

Carro N., D'Adamo P., Lozada M. (2020). An effective intervention can contribute to reducing perceived stress while promoting social integration in children. *EJREP*, 18(1), 183–201. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.brunel.ac.uk/10.25115/ejrep.v18i50.2600>

5 Carro N., D'Adamo P., Lozada M. (2020). An effective intervention can contribute to reducing perceived stress while promoting social integration in children. *EJREP*, 18(1), 183–201. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.brunel.ac.uk/10.25115/ejrep.v18i50.2600>

6 Chen, J. J. (2022). Self-compassion as key to stress resilience among first-year early childhood teachers during COVID-19: An interpretative phenomenological analysis. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 111, 103627. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2021.103627>