

# A Guide to Practical Compassion

*Editor's Pick. Written by Leo Babauta.*

If I've found two guiding principles in my life, they are contentment and compassion.

With these two ideas, life becomes better.

Contentment makes every moment better. And compassion makes your connection with others better.

## **What Compassion Is, & Some Difficulties**

Let's talk about compassion for a few minutes, because as important as it is, very few people talk about how to actually do it.

**First a definition:** the simple definition of compassion is feeling and understanding the pain of others, and then wanting to reduce that suffering.

In practice, it's a lot harder. How do you understand the pain of others? If I see anything about you, it's based on very limited information, just what you've shown me — and often, based on very limited interactions. So I have to project a story that I make up about you, and the truth is, it's probably wrong. But sometimes that's all we have to work with, and then gain more information once we've started to apply it.

If you have a large group of people — me trying to find compassion for all of you, for example — that can be very difficult. How do I find empathy with thousands of people? It's almost impossible. So you see that applied compassion can become a complex thing. Much more easily applied on an individual basis.

Read the full thing at [ZenHabits.net](http://ZenHabits.net) »