

# 2005-04-04 Empathy

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## SPEAKERS

Gil Fronsdal

This Saturday, I was at Red Morton Park, which is a park in the middle of Redwood City to kind of the biggest, biggest park with my two and a half year old son. And it was the I was also there with my seven year old son because it was the opening day of Little League baseball season. So it was the kind of the opening event. And now I kept my two and a half year old son's interest for about 20 minutes. And at some point he was no longer interested in being there. And so he started walking away. And I had a different idea of what you're supposed to do. And it became a little bit you know, my idea versus his idea and he was determined to work Walk out. And there's a lot of strategies of how to work with a two and a half year old, who has a will of his own. And I don't really know those strategies very well. And, but I thought it was interesting. So I'll just try letting him go. And if he gets, you know, 3040 feet away at some point, he'll realize that he's alone. And he'll get frightened or something, he'll come back and come back to me. Kind of kind of game of chicken right? To see who's gonna blink first. And he started walking 20 3050 feet, you know, and, and he wasn't blinking. He's kept going and going. And it's a very large the field where you were at was quite large, very large field. And I was kind of one edge with all the people and he was way off the other edge. I could see him quite well. I could see what was going on and I was watching him there. And now he wasn't any danger or anything, but we just walking down the path, you know, I don't know where he was going, but he was heading out. And, and there was really no one there. And then at some point, there's a woman ran by she was jogging. And she ran down the path and she saw this two and a half year old small guy kind of on run, and you look down pass to a guest and she looked around, you know, you know, something's not right here. You know, and I can see she kept running, but kind of looking at what's you know, where the parents were someone you know, and she didn't know that I was kind of, you know, tracking the situation. And, and then I saw her, she kept running, but she went on and on maybe in under another hundred yards or so. And there was a man sitting there. And she stopped and started asking him questions, you know, he was pointing back you know, I could didn't know what they said but I can imagine you know, what's going on here. You with that boy are you and so at that point, I blinked. And so then I went off to find him and go get him and bring him back. Do something with him. And but I

was so touched by this woman going by, and you know, this strong instinct, instinct, whatever it is strong feeling strong impulse she had seeing an unintended small child and being concerned enough concerned about that as it was her own business take care of and do something about and to stop and inquire and see what's going on here and look into that. What is it that what is that instinct was that impulse to care for a young child? So, my seven year old also this on Friday, he heard his finger not so seriously but seriously seriously enough that he had a knife took him to the emergency to have it x rayed and checked and he had one of those Kind of injuries that I think half of you are in the crowd here. Well if I tell you what it is you'll probably kind of cringe like chalk chalk Booker's, you know on a chalkboard you know somebody to tell me you know what what's your what's your reaction? I tell you what, what happened to me was finger he got jammed in the car door What are we sponsor and so he went to the doctor and it's not broken or anything but the doctor thought he should wear a doctor because they're Froggy. I don't know if you know this little kind of somebody called. Now it's called the frog. In our house at least. It's this little middle kind of blanket. You're wearing your finger so you don't bend it and some points on Saturday. Sunday my son was playing around or something and, and he didn't hurt it again he did but, but it was like, almost like he hit it or almost like kind of got hit by something. And, and, and before thinking before I didn't even have cognitive recognition was going on, I could feel my body kind of you know, I could almost feel his pain, you know the potential pain in that finger almost getting hit again and, and hurting. So human beings have a capacity of empathy, of feeling each other being concerned with each other caring for each other. That is a pretty deep impulse in most everyone. I think that we often get tuned in parts of it, part of our being tunes in to the emotional environment around us to the emotions of other people. And we relate to that we tune into that. Ai researchers have pointed out that even with people that are cognitively thinking, if they're tuning into the emotions around them, their facial, they, they kind of map very carefully the facial expressions of people, they see their facial expressions are changing slightly in relationship to the people who they're with. The person who's with gets sad. faces changes a little bit. And this evening, before coming here, I was reading a Dr. Seuss book to the two and a half year old. And there's a book called if I had a zoo, and notice a different story, you know, Horton and the who. And, and Horton, this elephant, partway through the book, it gets really sad. And there's two pages within this really sad face. And then the third page, he finds what he's looking for, and he's really happy. We've gone Over and over these three pages, you know, I can tell you how many times he's fascinated with these pages. And, and if this evening, I watched his face and his expression. And when he saw the sad Horton, it sees poor kid, you know, and I said, you know, what's happening here, and my son would say, in this, you know, always sad, you know, your face would drop and just his energy would drop. And I just, I didn't feel sad looking at the pictures of Dr. Zeus picture, but when I looked at my son reacting to that picture, it's like, this is serious stuff here. And then we've quickly turned to the other page, you know, that was no, my son, we just beat him up, you know, he's tremendous light beam, you know, and I feel really happy just seeing my son being so happy, you know, and so he was sensitive enough to the pictures, the cartoons and I was sensitive to a reaction. It's been said by some researchers that I don't know if I don't know Don't have any basis to understanding the evidence, but that some of our emotional reactions responses to people and situations is pre cognitive, that some of it certainly is cognitive, we have to kind of go through and think about things first and pass into the

filter of our thoughts or memories and ideas. And, but some of the things something certain things, certain kinds of emotions seem to have a certain pre cognitive aspect where before there's recognition for those thinking about it, before there's concepts around something, that somehow the nervous system or the bodily system will intuit or pick up or react or relate emotionally to what's happening. And in particular, what researchers have pointed out is that the caring emotions are this way emotions, of compassion, of caring, seem to have this kind of effect on people, that it seems to be quite innate qualities. In Buddhism, often especially in Mahayana, Buddhism, there's a great teachings about emptiness. And emptiness is a realization, the experience of emptiness is very important. And it said in the tradition, that the experience of emptiness in its most pristine forms, comes with compassion. Or when the mind is most empty, the mind is most clear. When the mind is not filled with art has concepts or ideas in it, thoughts in it, that has mine which is deeply apiece empty in the sense that it has compassion in there, there's somehow this doesn't it doesn't even have to have compassion for anything in particular, there's compassion in that place. So that the abandonment or the letting go of All the concepts we hold on to all the ideas of who I am and who other people are, what I need, what I want, in relaxing all those, which is a huge leap. Sometimes people forget to do that. One of the benefits of that is coming to a place of caring of compassion. And I believe that's one of the meanings of the Tibetan mantra, or Sanskrit with using Tibetan Buddhism a lot of money. Padme own money means jewel. And it's in the locket that means it's their own money. Padme Yeoman. Padme means Lotus. And ohm, in the beginning is just kind of like, you know, great. doesn't doesn't mean anything. It's just a mantra. And Ohm at the end is mantra like hallelujah. But money pardoning means the jewel in a lotus. So it's like hail, the jewel and Lotus Hello. Have you and Julian Lotus Lotus which is a refers to the enlightened mind and enlightened the heart. And the jewel is that jewel was which which is found within the enlightened heart within the freed or the awakened heart. And that jewel is compassion. So they could the heart of awakening is just wonderful jewel of compassion of caring. In most it's been, it's been pointed out, I haven't done the survey myself, but as we pointed out that a lot of different religions have something rather that's similar to the gold which called the Golden Rule. Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. In Buddhism, there's a few different places where it says that something like that but one of the one I could find this evening was everyone trembles and violence. Everyone's everywhere. Everyone fears death. Seeing others as being like yourself, do not kill or cause others to kill. Seeing others as being like yourself. So here's an act of imagination of seeing others, as if they're yourself being in kind of being in your shoes in a sensor, imagine then your shoes. So what was it? If you were in their shoes, how would you experience something? Or if they were you, and they were experiencing certain difficulties in life, what would it be like? So it's kind of the movement of empathy is in part in a movement of imagination. And in part, it's something which is pre imagination, pre cognitive, it's built, they enhance each other. So the idea of imagining yourself as other doing unto others as you'd want them to do unto you. In the Mahabharata, so in Hinduism, it says Do nothing to others, which would cause you pain if done to you, or Confucius. What I don't wish people to do to me, I also do not wish to do to them. And Mohammed, no one is a believer until he or she desires for others. That's which he or she desires for herself. And Jesus, whatever you want others to do for you Do unto others. And then there's George Bernard Bernard Shaw. Don't do unto others as you would want them to do to you. They might they may have different tastes. It's been said

in Buddhism that that one of the primary foundations for Buddhist ethics is this kind of empathy is kind of placing themselves in someone else's shoes, imagining self as other other selves. And, and it's quite remarkable how much what happens when really sense and feel understand someone else's situation. When we don't normally imagine what it was like doing, not only imagine would be like for you to have that experience, which is keeps you a little bit removed from what it is like for that person to have that experience, because that person has a different history, different dispositions, different capacities, different all kinds of things than you have. So for them to kind of break their finger might have very different meaning that for you to break your finger or some whatever. So the act of imagination, imagine what it's like if you were completely inept. And situation experiencing, which is like

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some of you probably perhaps may be new here today. Some of you have been here for a while. I know a few people here. But if we took 10 minutes, and we're not going to do it, so don't worry. But if we took 10 minutes, and form little groups of say three or four, or five or something, and spend a little time everyone saying little bit about the struggles they or their family are having right now. Their extended family, whatever, we would find that there's our hearts which are opening up very quickly to people who maybe were strangers to begin with in 10 minutes, we can kind of get a very quick heartfelt connection, just hearing about the challenges and struggles people having with family members who are sick or in hospital or dying or, you know, relatives or neighbors or someone or you know, sticking things were struggling with drugs and alcohol and work and being fired and going to jail and you know, all kinds of exciting things that I know, some of those things I know happening here. And it would change the tenor of how we the sense of how we are with everyone here. Some people in the here, we're going to do exercise now and find out who's here and what's going on. So people get shy, some people don't want to, and it can be very, very quick kind of defensiveness arises a kind of resistance to getting to know someone else. And it's seen most clearly. But people often mentioned it in you know, going down the street and someone's homeless people, some people put up their resist in a guard, you know, oh, no, no, you read about the Pope and how wonderful he was and passionate he was so inspired by what he's done to the world. Now you help the poor and all that, and they allow that's how to be and then you go out onto the street. And you see this homeless person and not that, not that One, you know, the guards go up. There's often fear, if I get to know someone or let them in that, then I'll be pulled into a whole world I don't wanna be part of or expectations or, you know, will be on me and be difficult to extract myself from it. So one of the foundations of Buddhist ethics is empathy. And it's an interesting foundation because it's not rule based. It's not some commandment that comes down from above, but rather it's based on sensibility that we can have a sense we can have a of what's what's going on around us and sense of the impact things have on people not wanting to cause harm because we can feel what that harm causes for them. There are times in our life when that sensitivity can be become stronger. And sometimes when it gets weaker, if we're harried and busy, or self absorbed, it's very hard to have the sensitivity to the people around us the impact life is having on them, their emotional things, what's going on. And there are some times when, for various

reasons, we might be hypersensitive. And some people fall you know, naturally in a range of sensitivity. There was a time in my life where I remember once someone pulled a leaf of a tree, and I felt pain. I don't I'm not gonna try to explain why or what was going on. You know, I've never felt such tremendous pain. How could they do that? There was a time in my life where I'd spent basically three months more or less on retreat, and had a very, very deep to the tivity very great openness to life. And just Pulling off a leaf was something that cost me you know, how could they do that? You know, I couldn't imagine pulling a leaf off a tree. No, I pull these off trees. So I've gone downhill a little bit from there. But But, but I had that tremendous sensitivity, sensitivity, ethical sensitivity, your sensitivity and empathy or being connected to others is partly connected to feeling unthreatened and feeling relaxed. If we feel threatened, it's hard to have empathy, heart have feelings of commitment connected to someone else. And if we feel relaxed, if you're not feeling relaxed, it's also hard. But to be relaxed and unthreatened meditation practice, one of the things that's trying to do for us is help us be more relaxed. As we become more relaxed, we become more sensitive. Also, a meditation practice is trying to help us find a place of being a healthy place the appropriate place of feeling uncorrected. undefended and mostly what people are threatened with in life is not the saber toothed Tigers chasing you down the street. But most people are threatened. You know, the people who live in a chronic feelings of fear or threat is often having to do with their ego with a sense of self, when other people like me when they reject me, or they get what I want, and to be to discover a place of being unthreatened is to discover a place in the psyche, a place in the mind or in the heart, where we have nothing very little at stake, where someone could say something or someone can like us and not like us. No, it's okay. You know, does it we don't feel like our sense of self worth or own happiness is dependent on that. We all feel crushed by many things we might feel it has to do with our ego. So part of what meditation is trying to find a sense of fine for us, a place of well being where we realize we're not threatened by A place where we can't be threatened or place we because we've created walls around us. Because we no longer have these buttons of being egotistical or being, you know, afraid of things that maybe we don't need to be afraid of. One of the things that meditation deep meditation practice is meant to also help with is to come to terms with the fear of death, of dying. And when the person doesn't have fear of death, then you might get again you can unpatentable a rocket you can go off to a lot of different situations without as much fear. So discover a place to not be the unthreatened place of being relaxed at ease open. And so you have defended in that place, then it's possible to have greater levels of empathy or care connectedness. Now, why That, what why Why be interested in? Why is developing greater empathy a useful thing? For one thing, it's seems to be self serving to do that. So that's, you know, good, right? And they wonderful, this is wonderful what science discovers, right? More and more. And what they discovered is that when there is a healthy expression of empathy and compassion that the body releases releases oxytocin. And oxytocin is a chemical that makes people feel good. It makes mothers feels good. oxytocin is released. The nurse oxytocin, I think is released sometimes in child birth. oxytocin is, you know, wonderful chemical in the body. And it seems like acts of compassion, I've been able to measure releases oxytocin, you feel better. And however, distressed anxiety over someone else's suffering doesn't release oxytocin. anxiety, distress over someone else's suffering increases the heart rate. compassionate response, decreases the heart rate. So you actually become calmer, more relaxed. And I remember once traveling and going on a



kind of a guided tour in the desert someplace going over these kind of clips, isn't that hiking and there was this woman, elderly woman who had trouble kind of pulling herself up over these ledges we have to pull ourselves up over and around was a little bit difficult. And, and so I kind of stayed behind and helped her, you know, lift her up and give her hand in different things. And what I noticed was How much I loved helping her. I just thought it was the best, best feeling inside of me This is great. And, you know, I wasn't clear after a while what I was doing for myself or for her because I just felt so good. This is odd. This is really something and then recently I read about oxytocin, I wondered whether that, you know, I was just getting a big storm of it. And so, one of the ways of feeling good, is to help others. And that's one of the great cardinal rules of spiritual life everywhere, is if you want to feel good if you want to develop your spiritual life, forget about yourself and focus more on helping other people. And, and now we know why. You know, it's not some mysterious thing, but at least part of it has to do with chemicals. You'll feel better if you kind of be self self preoccupation, probably doesn't release a lot of oxytocin but being concerned and helpful for others, you When that does it, there's often a lawyer, an attorney, that goes along with self concern that says it self concerned is really important. You have to be concerned for yourself and that's how you're going to get your happiness in your life. And so there's tremendous arguments, you know, in the in the head, that keeps you in, got involved in self concern, but to learn to relax it to some degree, and to offer yourself to others in a way. I think there's a lot of people in our society that they feel a lot more psychological health by doing that. So partly it's self serving. But I don't like that so much, you know, you could do it just for yourself can only be really compassionate now. So do my own benefit. That's kind of odd arguments. I think that it just kind of like I think it's a side benefit from it. The Before I had to kind of read these kind of studies, I was quite content for myself for talking about Buddhism to some degree, to say something like, there seems to be just in it. That's kind of partly who we are who I am. Is it partly someone who responds, if they're suffering, someone's in distress, to offer to help to just, it's inseparable from who I am, are inseparable, inseparable to the situation or to nature. They just went, when I'm relaxed, what wants to come out of me what flows is concerned for others, and it's not premeditated. It's not doing it because it's a good idea. It's, it's not something that's forced or imagined. It just kind of, that's what comes out. That's what happens. And not to let it flow not to let it happen. Is it Kind of violence are kind of a limitation is kind of like stopping something. The and so the movement towards empathy and compassion, compassionate response doesn't it's not something has to be premeditated at all. It doesn't have to be you don't be told that you should do this. But rather it's something that arises naturally when the heart is open when we're open and relaxed, and undefended. So in my own spiritual life, I'm Buddhist practice. I've noticed that, as I practice, my practice went on and on, that my heart got more and more open. And I was really surprised by that, because when I first became a Zen student, I, the word compassion wasn't in my active vocabulary. And I had no idea that it was something I should even want or desire. And I was really into the wisdom side of Buddhism. And then I was surprised, in retrospect, looking back of my early years of Zen practice, that I wasn't getting any more enlightened doing Zen practice. But I was getting compassion. And through all the difficulties and struggles that I had, that slowly it was opening and relaxing my heart. And I was having developing this tremendous sense of sensitivity to the world to others. And that sensitivity then felt like something very innate, very deep and very integral to who I am if we can talk about myself. And, and something I

could I can't imagine when it's they're not responding to anything by and I think there's many people who find that as they do some kind of spiritual practice. And spiritual practice tends to open the heart and not to allow it to open the heart to stay defended and frozen, is really to shortchange what's possible the potential of the human heart because one of the really most beautiful things Because that you will notice that wonderful treasure that can be found in our hearts. And let that mystery of empathy, the mystery of compassion. So those are my thoughts about this wonderful topic. I hope that I conveyed and still talk the wonderfulness of it. The Do you have any thoughts about it? Any comments or questions?

just seems that with the

biologic state, and wondering why the chemistry part happens, having that positive feedback that oxytocin, that's a positive adaptation for society for community. If your body seeds you back, something positive when you have something that's helping something else is going to help the whole community so

Biology has a good way of doing that.

Yeah. So part of the evolution perhaps is, is rather than survival of the fittest, this is survival of the ones who had the most oxytocin survival the ones who could care for each other and, and an offer compassion. One is smaller advantage aside advantage may be that when we are compassion, we get some relief from the preoccupation with our own problems that can be and that sometimes can be sometimes it can be a danger sometimes it's helpful to where compassion can relieve are kind of on preoccupied occupation or on problems, but are some people who get addicted to helping other people as a way of avoiding their own problems? That's also possible so it can become escape. It can escape

Could you give some of the hallmarks of when not getting involved is really the best activity? Not being involved? Yes. Not, not reaching out not doing something like, let's say with a drug addict who's done this for quite a while, something like that.

Yeah, I mean, if it's not going to help someone, you know, it's not gonna be helpful, then don't help. Don't try to help. It's not gonna be helpful. And so how is it? So with a drug addict, sometimes, sometimes it becomes an enabling movement where you kind of helping someone along, and sometimes some people have to reach rock bottom. It's very sad. And sometimes I know, I've known parents of alcoholic children, for example, had to make that kind of heart wrenching decision to just let the child go. And they come home, homeless and you know, they kind of drunk and whatever and they've really tried everything, everything they can do, but nothing's going to help and it almost got keeps keeps the Kind of coasting along with a difficult state by trying to help. And, and occasionally these, okay, let this person bottom out and then situations I've known the child then came back. But

there's risk involved in because sometimes they don't you know, sometimes it doesn't help. Sometimes people are attached to being a victim. And so to treat them with compassion is to kind of somehow reinforcing the victim mentality that has worked for me. And so it kind of get a sense of, you know, the consequences of trying to help someone and hopefully we have the wisdom to see that and know when it's not appropriate. That's what the curse to me now it's a very important question, and maybe some other people have comments to make about when it's not appropriate to help someone who's in distress.

How do you decide when not help somebody let me I'm a professor I teach. If I fail somebody in a particular course, there's a problem, either the person will be thrown out of the school or to another college. And you realize that when you show to what compassion, the student is not going to improve. Where do you how do you draw the line? Is it through experience? Or is it through humanity? Or is it through, you know, training, like more lectures are in here, the more I become lenient in the class more, what I become very lenient, in terms of making sure that I don't throw the student out of the program is that

you know, I don't have easy answers to any of this. But one of one of the ways of finding an answer to these kinds of questions, is trying to get to know the person better. So the more you know about the person, the more and so it's not just your imagination about to think they might be then you have more information to build a case for what To do, and I could imagine there was some there might be occasionally once every 10 years, for example, I don't know what a student for whom the best thing you could do for the student is to fail the student. And the student kind of has to realize, wow, then it really wakes the person up, wow, I better get serious here. And, and that's really the best thing to come back and come back to you many years later. It's like, the best thing you did for me in school, she failed me

is everything so far?

But, you know, how do you make these decisions and you know, sometimes really tough, you know, make these big decisions for people and they're supposed to have big consequences, you know, quite a big consequences, and we wouldn't be responsible for these big consequences. It's a hard one. I had to fails. I was taught a class at the ICP once instead of transpersonal psychology, and I failed someone. And I hated doing it. You know, just, but the person hadn't hadn't done any of the work.

Well, I think there's the experience of compassion and then when when to act or be involved in when not and I think of I've watched a lot of people including myself get over committed and over involved in helping people and becoming sort of really a problem. And so I think there's a Thomas Merton quote about that, that I don't have memorized but it it ends with doing too much is submitting to violence. I it's it's a really, I don't know, tricky. Balance this.



There is a also beautiful quote of someone says someone is someone wrote it after being in South Africa back in the apartheid times. And but anybody who's about a story about someone, finding a cocoon seeing a butterfly structure and struggle out of it, cocoon. And so the person goes along and helps the butterfly. And the butterfly falls to the ground and dies. And what the person doesn't really didn't realize is that only by struggling out of the cocoon does the wings get strong enough so that butterfly can fly. So sometimes you need to leave people, you know, to struggle to or to make effort. Sometimes with my seven year old son, sometimes I don't I don't eat sometimes he wants help. And he's in some kind of distress. And I tried to be really present for him and say, you know, I'm here. I care about what's going on. And I'll stay with you as you try to figure it out. Sometimes he doesn't feel alone or abandoned, but he also realizes he's not can't depend on me always.

Yeah, I wanted to sort of follow up on what you were saying. I I think it's interesting that we went from compassion to help. Big I think they are very different things. Compassion is a state of being.

And health is an action.

And so it like every action requires skillful means. And I think that's what we're talking about in a distinction. Just like someone can

feel angry.

They're in a state of internal anger.

But they don't necessarily add.

capacity. Compassion is a way of being

that may predict certain kinds of behaviors, but doesn't prejudge action.

The word that comes to mind is wisdom.

And the Serenity Prayer in particular, which goes something like, change what you can change, except what you can't, and have the wisdom to know the difference. So it seems to me that the connection between compassion in action is wisdom,

wisdom. Yeah, I think so. And one of the, one of the one of the guidelines that I, that I, I use a lot I think is very, very useful is I try to pay very careful attention to my internal state, my emotional state, if I'm trying to help, have compassion. And if I'm, if there's any fear or aversion in my try to get rid of something, push something away, or from aversion or from afraid in the situation, then I think, no, I have to pay much more careful attention, because then it's more likely to be unwise about how I

respond or act. And so rather than Understanding the other person more, it's also very important to understand oneself more. And they track that one's own emotional responses are tremendous, important information about our intentions and what's going on.

You probably answered.

You were saying about

compassion. And

I can't remember the name of mechanical. Yeah. And then you mentioned something about, but if you're anxious, like anxious and anxiety, it's the opposite. Now, if you have compassion for someone,

and you're feeling the pain,

and it brings an anxiety to you,

then that that's the opposite.

This chemical

you were talking about the leaf at one time after a fight when you even felt the pain but now you can do it. So there's a balance you've got to learn. Like I had a

prime example Yesterday my

my dad his dog

was pretty much passing away

although we didn't know just how long but I was sitting in it and being with the dog and just touching it was gave me a nice feeling. I was there for him. But also it was struggling with the breathing and couldn't lay down and watching I could feel that and anxiety inside me.

This part of me wanted to get away because I can

So that was mine, this chemical, it makes you feel good. But what happens when you said about your land, when the leaf that you know, can touch a leaf and you feel that is that just going through the learning and getting more wisdom, I

think there's, you know, a lot of different things that can happen our responses to suffering in the world. I mean, one is a compassionate, empathic, compassionate concern. And it's also which often, even though my comments, some feelings of wholeness or integrity or warmth or kind of the oxytocin effect or something, the It could also it also hurts to weaken and it can be pain, empathy, sometimes it comes with a sense of pain. But that's also can be distinguished from distress, or anxiety. And I think it's very, I've been in situations where someone has been in tremendous suffering. And I felt, you know, kind of like I was happening to me and it felt Right, in a sense, it felt right. That, you know, felt painful for me to be there in the room with the person. But I didn't want to sit in a sense I didn't want the person to suffer but at the same time, in a sense it was you know, it was right somehow just felt right. And, and I tried to alleviate or try to help be helpful, but just felt right about it. Even though it hurt, and there was empathy was there, the compassion was there. But then there's it distinct from that is anxiety and distress and fear is often based on fear and worry, and stronger the level of distress we have around suffering externally in the world. More often, I think my observation is that it has to do with unresolved emotions and feelings within ourselves. I knew someone who had a tremendous anxiety not about people suffering but pet suffering, animal suffering, and when I work, check With the person worked with the person who made this, you know, kind of out of the charts kind of anxiety about pet suffering. It turned out the person if I remembered writes many years ago now with someone who had grown up in a war zone, and there was all this scars, internal scars about about suffering and murder and death and all these things that have happened. And, and somehow, the symbolically, I guess the suffering of pets was what resonated with this deep unresolved suffering from her childhood. And so she needs to go back to this childhood trauma. What happened to her and when she did that, then she was able to kind of not feel such horror, horror around pets being injured or dying. So hopefully she still feels you know, some concern about injured or pets and stuff. But the anxiety had nothing to do with less to do with the past and had to do with their own unresolved issues. Thank you.

I think the distinction between compassion and action was a really good one. And I would just comment on the teacher question I've just been teaching for a couple years, and I had that same thing of Oh my God, I'm gonna fail this student and they're coming in saying oh or not, I've never failed but lower than they wanted. And oh, you got to do this, or I won't make the honor roll and all this stuff and really suffered with that. And then I started getting requests for recommendation for these folks to go to medical school, and I'm there Whoa, this person is not medical school material. And they're, they're applying to all these medical schools. And I'm thinking of all the suffering that they're setting themselves up for because they've never gotten the feedback that maybe this they're this great person that could do all these great things, but medical school ain't yet. And so I think, you know, I mean, for me, looking at it from the bigger picture. I could be very compassionate and that would be the greater compassionate thing to help them understand where they could contribute in the world. Instead of giving them a great grade that sends them on the wrong path that they really couldn't do.

I tell a story of a friend of mine who's being trained to be a hospital chaplain. So she's doing the rounds in hospitals and CP. And she's a it's been the hardest year of my life. And but my supervisors love me, they think I'm the best, but they keep coming to me and saying, what they keep telling me is, you're not living up to your potential. Yeah. And, you know, you we see that you have this great potential you're holding back you're shy, you know, and keep pushing, you're you have to fulfill you know, to fulfill your potential, and that kind of stepping forward, being pushed forward is really hard for kind of painful for her, but she also is valuing and she's going to make a career out of this. So Anyway, I hope this has been useful or interesting discussion. And you might over the next days or week, study a little bit your own responses and reactions to other people and other people's suffering and the movements inside of you of compassion, of empathy, of caring, of anxiety, kind of study the whole complex of stuff and become more sensitive to the whole. And my belief is that the more we understand, see what how we work, the more wisdom is going to be there. Thank you.