

COPING WITH COVID-19

4th Edition, April 16, 2020

Practicing Empathy, Compassion, and Kindness; to lessen Judgement and Resentment

During this global pandemic, some things are the same for all of us, while some things are very different. Let's explore some of the thoughts and feelings that come up for us around those differences.

While we are ALL to be physically distancing, washing our hands, and staying home where possible, there are many things about this situation that remain very different for different people, based on many diverse variables. Some of these variables include:

- Do you still have full income, partial income, or no income?
- Do you have children who are home from school and/or daycare that you are attempting to home school?
- Are you sick, or do you have elderly family members who are sick or vulnerable?
- Are you expected to work from home while managing the usual household tasks, and home schooling, or has your work stopped and you are enjoying the "break"?
- Are you eligible for EI or other supports and benefits?
- Do you suffer with mental illness such as anxiety or depression that is only exacerbated by this situation?
- Do you feel safe and comfortable in your home and with the people who live there?

As you consider your answers to these questions, you may notice that over the last month you've felt some feelings towards others whose situation is different from yours. Perhaps you've experienced:

Resentment - "It's not fair that they are playing with their kids while I'm here working extra hard".

Guilt - "I'm relaxing in the sun while so many others are risking their safety as frontline workers".

Jealousy - "I wish I had the time to bake and workout but between these kids and this computer I don't have any time for me".

Judgement - "Did you see those people only 4 feet apart instead of 6! Don't they care about everyone's health and safety!"

Anger - "How dare you sneeze near me!"

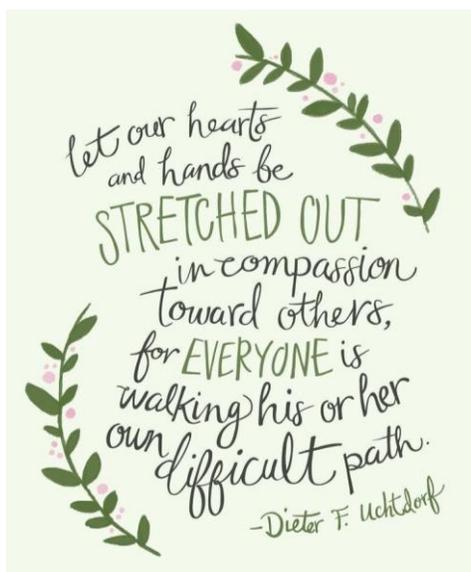
We can all agree that while these emotions are natural – they are not helpful. And if we go through our days with these feelings weighing us down, we are not likely to be coping with COVID very well at all. To combat these feelings and help you find peace, comfort, and non-judgement through this challenging time, try shifting your perspective using these simple strategies:

1. Consider the questions above and how other's answers might be different from yours, and how that might impact how they are coping and the choices they are making. When we put ourselves in other's shoes and imagine how their circumstances are different than ours, the *EMPATHY and COMPASSION* that we then feel can be very helpful and soothing to the above list of less desirable emotions.
2. Take a dose of that compassion – and turn it toward yourself. Remember that you too, are doing the best you can with the circumstances you are facing. Guilt is destructive and not helpful. So is self-criticism.
3. Avoid comparisons. The fact is that you may not be able to answer the questions above for many others. You just don't know the answers. It's not your life and it's not your business. So try to avoid comparing yourself to others. Remember that you don't know all the details of their struggle – and they don't know yours. Rather than making assumptions, mind reading, and jumping to ill-informed conclusions, it's better to accept what you don't know and fall back on *empathy, compassion*, and of course, *kindness*.

Whatever combination of variables makes your situation unique, now is the time to consider what has become a frequently voiced phrase during the last month – *we are all in this together*. Be kind to yourself, and to others.

Compassion for others begins with kindness to ourselves.

– Pema Chodron



Additional thoughts:

Podcast - How to Exercise Your Empathy: NPR

<https://www.npr.org/2019/07/22/744195502/you-2-0-the-empathy-gym>

<https://inspirekindness.com/blog/practicing-kindness-during-the-coronavirus>

<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/coronavirus/random-acts-kindness>