

# **compassion scale**

## **how I typically act towards others ...**

please read each statement carefully before answering; using the scale given below indicate, to the right of each item, how often you behave in the stated manner:

**almost never**  
**1**

**2**

**3**

**4**

**almost always**  
**5**

1	<i>when people cry in front of me, I often don't feel anything at all</i>	
2	<i>sometimes when people talk about their problems, I feel like I don't care</i>	
3	<i>I don't feel emotionally connected to people in pain</i>	
4	I pay careful attention when other people talk to me	
5	<i>I feel detached from others when they tell me their tales of woe</i>	
6	if I see someone going through a difficult time, I try to be caring toward that person	
7	<i>I often tune out when people tell me about their troubles</i>	
8	I like to be there for others in times of difficulty	
9	I notice when people are upset, even if they don't say anything	
10	<i>when I see someone feeling down, I feel like I can't relate to them</i>	
11	everyone feels down sometimes, it is part of being human	
12	<i>sometimes I am cold to others when they are down and out</i>	
13	I tend to listen patiently when people tell me their problems	
14	<i>I don't concern myself with other people's problems</i>	
15	it's important to recognize that all people have weaknesses and no one's perfect	
16	my heart goes out to people who are unhappy	
17	despite my differences with others, I know that everyone feels pain just like me	
18	<i>when others are feeling troubled, I usually let someone else attend to them</i>	
19	<i>I don't think much about the concerns of others</i>	
20	suffering is just a part of the common human experience	
21	when people tell me about their problems, I try to keep a balanced perspective on the situation	
22	<i>I can't really connect with other people when they're suffering</i>	
23	<i>I try to avoid people who are experiencing a lot of pain</i>	
24	when others feel sadness, I try to comfort them	

*(to reverse score questions, subtract each answer from 6)*

**kindness (6, 8, 16, 24) =**

**indifference (2, 12, 14, 18 - reverse scored) =**

**common humanity (11, 15, 17, 20) =**

**separation (3, 5, 10, 22 - reverse scored) =**

**mindfulness (4, 9, 13, 21) =**

**disengagement (1, 7, 19, 23 - reverse scored) =**

**total score =**

*for more detail on scoring and on typical scores for men & women, and the relationship between compassion & self-compassion for students, adults & meditators, see the next page*

## **compassion scale: scoring**

Elizabeth Pommier suggests scoring the "*Compassion scale*" by averaging scores for the sub-scales. In clinical use this seems to simply make assessment more time consuming, so I have just given total scores below (indifference, separation & disengagement are reverse-scored).

In a study of 439 US students, mean scores (with standard deviations) were:

*kindness = 15.6 (2.6)*

*indifference = 14.4 (2.4)*

*common humanity = 16.2 (2.5)*

*separation = 14.9 (2.3)*

*mindfulness = 15.8 (2.3)*

*disengagement = 15.3 (2.3)*

*note that in this student group, women scored significantly higher on compassion than men, so:  
for women, total score = 95.0 (9.8): so about 70% score in range 85 to 105 & 95% 76 to 115  
for men, total score = 86.9 (11.5): so about 70% score in range 75 to 98 & 95% 64 to 110  
for everyone, total score = 92.2 (14.4): so about 70% score in range 78 to 107 & 95% 63 to 120*

*see the Neff & Pommier study below for more on differences between varied groups*

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Pommier, E. (2011). "*The compassion scale*"; University of Texas at Austin: 262.

These studies define a Buddhist conceptualization of compassion and describe the development of the Compassion Scale. The definition of compassion was adopted from Neff's (2003) model of self-compassion that proposes that the construct entails kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness. The six-factor structure was adopted from the Self-Compassion Scale (2003) representing positively and negatively worded items of the three components proposed to entail compassion. The six-factors for compassion are named: kindness vs. indifference, common humanity vs. separation, and mindfulness vs. disengagement. Study 1 was conducted to provide support for content validity. Study 2 was conducted to provide initial validation for the scale. Study 3 was conducted to cross-validate findings from the second study. Results provide evidence for the structure of the scale. Cronbach's alpha and split-half estimates suggest good reliability for both samples. Compassion was significantly correlated with compassionate love, wisdom, social connectedness, and empathy providing support for convergent validity. Factor analysis in both samples indicated good fit using Hu & Bentler (1998) criteria. Results suggest that the Compassion Scale is a psychometrically sound measure of compassion. Given that Buddhist concepts of compassion are receiving increased attention in psychology (e.g. Davidson, 2006; Gilbert, 2005, Goetz, 2010) this scale will hopefully prove useful in research that examines compassion from a non-Western perspective. (*Note the full text of this thesis is freely downloadable from the web, while the copyrighted "Compassion scale" is accessible at [www.self-compassion.org](http://www.self-compassion.org)*).

Neff, K. D. and E. Pommier (2012). "*The relationship between self-compassion and other-focused concern among college undergraduates, community adults, and practicing meditators.*" *Self and Identity*: 1-17.

The present study examined the link between self-compassion and concern for the well-being of others. Other-focused concern variables included compassion for humanity, empathetic concern, perspective taking, personal distress, altruism and forgiveness. Participants included 384 college undergraduates, 400 community adults, and 172 practicing meditators. Among all participant groups, higher levels of self-compassion were significantly linked to more perspective taking, less personal distress, and greater forgiveness. Self-compassion was linked to compassion for humanity, empathetic concern, and altruism among community adults and meditators but not college undergraduates. The strength of the association between self-compassion and other-focused concern also varied according to participant group and gender. The strongest links tended to be found among meditators, while women tended to show weaker associations than men.

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