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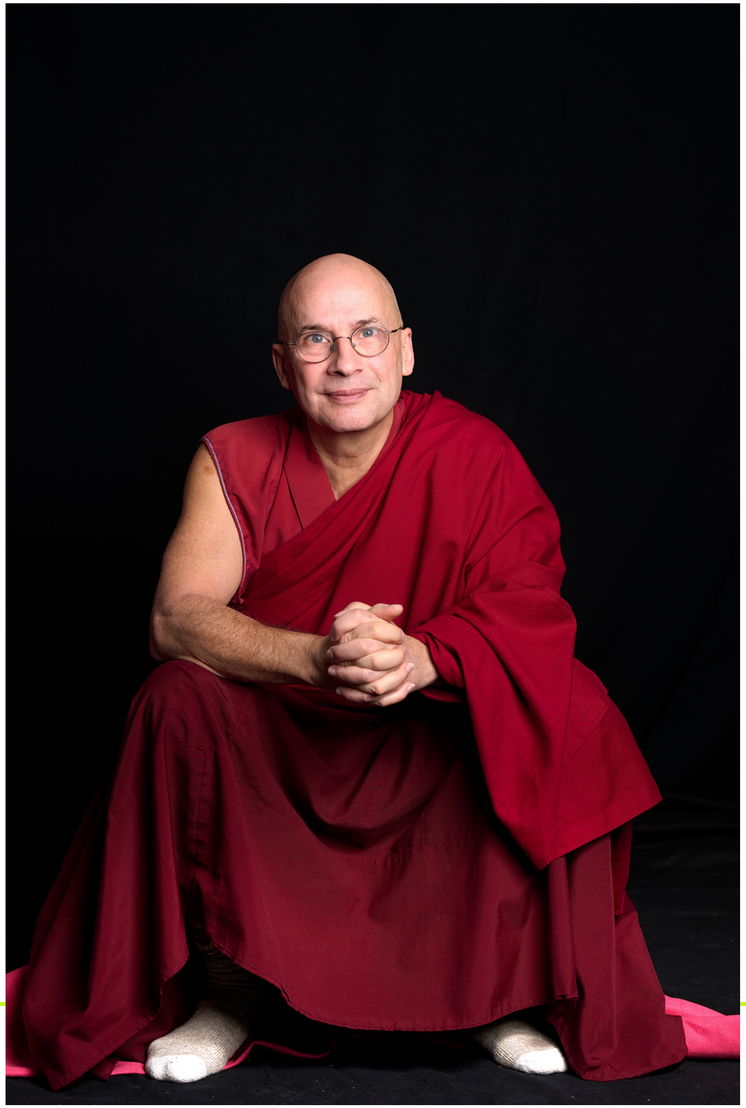
Developing Peaceful Acceptance and Cultivating Self-Compassion

TENZIN PELJOR | MAI 2026

Who am I?



- Tibetan Buddhist monk, ordained by H.H. the Dalai Lama (India)
- Graduate of the FPMT Masters Program in Buddhist Studies (Istituto Lama Tzong Khapa, Italy)
- Graduate of the Mindfulness Meditation Teacher Certification Program, Tara Brach & Jack Kornfield (USA)
- Pre-Diploma in Computer Science (Germany)
- Post-Graduate Studies in Drama Education (Germany)

Before taking robes, I worked in IT (systems administration and programming), as a drama educator at a private school, for the Berlin Senate in individual case and family support services, and in a drug addiction project. As a monk, I began teaching in prisons and co-developed a resilience programme for children with a researcher.

My work continues with children, young people, and prisoners, with a focus on emotional regulation. Based in Germany, I teach locally and internationally, leading Buddhist study and meditation programmes both in person and online. I am also specialised in the dynamics of high-control groups and religious cults.

Overview

1. Mindfulness
2. Peaceful Acceptance
3. Compassion / Self-Compassion
4. References

1. Traditional Definition of Right Mindfulness

"And what, bhikkhus, is **right mindfulness**? Here a bhikkhu dwells contemplating the body in the body, **ardent, clearly comprehending, mindful,** having removed covetousness and displeasure with reference to the world. He dwells contemplating feelings in feelings ... He dwells contemplating mind in mind ... He dwells contemplating phenomena in phenomena, ardent, clearly comprehending, mindful, having removed covetousness and displeasure with reference to the world. This is called right mindfulness."

— The Buddha, SN 45:8 / MN 141.30 / DN 22.21, trans. Bhikkhu Bodhi

1. Traditional Definition of Mindfulness

Regarding the entity of mindfulness, the Compendium of Knowledge says:

QUESTION: What is mindfulness?
RESPONSE: It is a non-forgetfulness of the mind with respect to a familiar object. It has the function of non-distraction.

Just as it has been said above, it is a knower that possesses three features. These three features are:

1. objective feature – a familiar object
2. [subjective] aspect feature – a non-forgetfulness upon having observed that object; and
3. functional feature – non-distraction

1. Traditional Definition of Introspection & Effort

Introspection (*samprajñāna*, Pali: sampajañña; also: alertness, clear comprehension, self-observation, meta-awareness,): conscious awareness of what is occurring in the present moment on the mental, verbal, and bodily level.

Effort / Energy / Diligence / Persistence (*vīrya*, Pali: *viriya*): four activities: to bring forth qualities that have not yet arisen; to nurture and strengthen qualities that have already arisen; to prevent limitations that have not yet arisen from arising; and to diminish and overcome limitations that have already arisen.

(Effort presupposes goals and a value system. The sequence is: first develop conviction [wisdom, trust, understanding] — from this arises aspiration — which leads to effort. Like all qualities, effort has its specific primary obstacle: laziness.)

1. Modern Definition of Mindfulness

"Mindfulness (*smṛti*, *sati*) means paying attention in a particular way:

- on purpose,
- in the present moment,
- and non-judgmentally."

— Jon Kabat-Zinn, Wherever You Go, There You Are (1994)

1. Traditional Modell of Consciousnesses

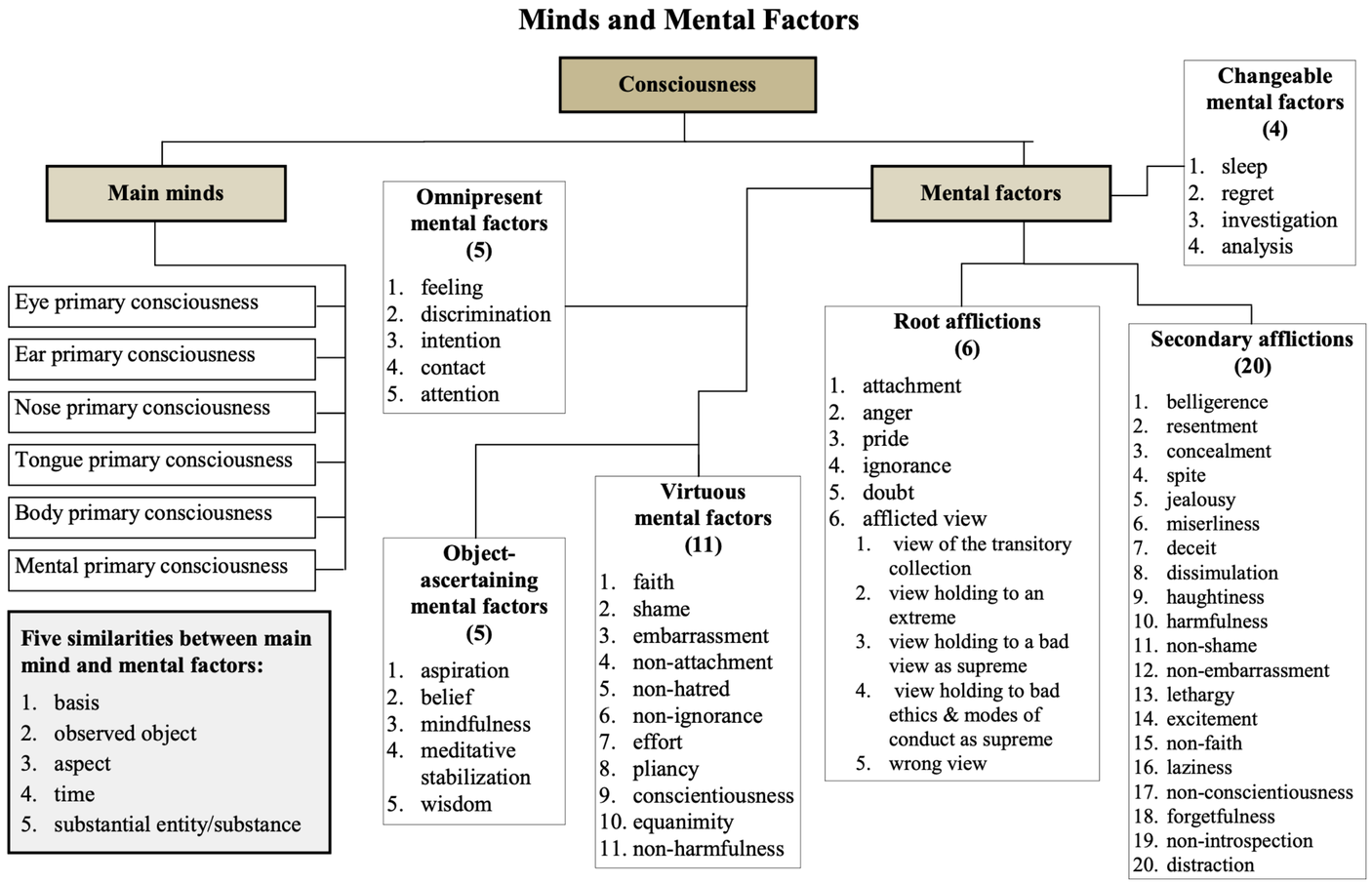
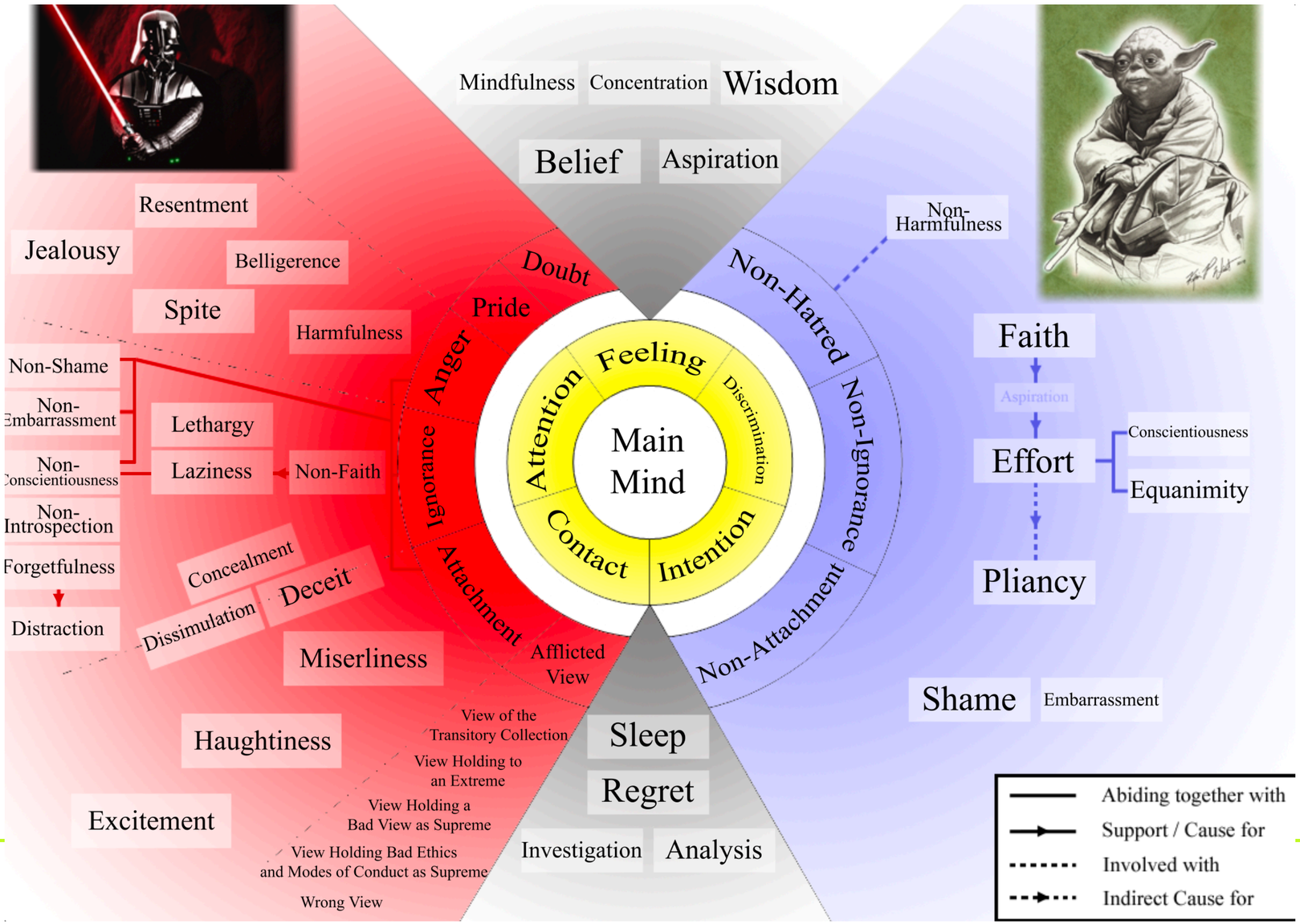


Chart created on the basis of *A Necklace for Those of Clear Awareness Clearly Revealing the Modes of Minds and Mental Factors* by Ye-she Gyel-tsen (2012)

1. Traditional Modell of Consciousnesses

Vulnerable Child Mode



Healthy Adult Mode

2. The Connection: Peaceful Acceptance as the Ground of Compassion

You cannot respond with genuine kindness to what you cannot bear to be with. If suffering triggers stress, resistance, or overwhelm, compassion is usually not possible — it is either blocked, or it collapses into pity, avoidance, or emotional flooding.

Only when you can hold the pain and *meet it with a peaceful mind* — does genuine compassion become possible.

Peaceful acceptance is not indifference. It is not resignation. It is the stable, open ground that creates the space for compassion to arise. This is why acceptance usually needs to come first.

When people are stressed and their sympathetic nervous system is activated, access to their inner resources and healthy modes is significantly reduced. When they can calm down and their soothing system (parasympathetic nervous system) is activated, qualities such as love, compassion, understanding, and tolerance can arise far more readily.

2. Foundation: Kṣānti — Patience, Forbearance, Acceptance

The Buddha famously declared *kṣānti* — patience or forbearance — to be the supreme purification practice. He pointed not to physical asceticism, but to restraining the mind from aversion (anger, aggression, or hatred) and to meeting *dukkha* (pain, suffering, discomfort) with a peaceful mind that has the capacity to be with it, to hold it, without being absorbed by it.

Pure patience is the kind of acceptance that acknowledges the presence of something unpleasant without adding anything to it, covering it up, or being upset by it. It is not numbing resignation — it means bearing with *dukkha* without the expectation that it will go away, so that the mind can open, understand, and find its way through.

2. The Two Arrows: A Teaching from the Buddha

In the Sallatha Sutta (SN 36.6), the Buddha illustrates the situation of the untrained person using the image of someone struck by two arrows.

The first arrow is physical or emotional pain — unavoidable, part of existence. The second arrow is the mental reaction to that pain: resistance, aversion, or simply being unhappy about it.

The trained practitioner is still struck by the first arrow.
But they do not pick up the second.

Mathematically: Pain x Resistance = Suffering

2. The Third Arrow: CFT Extension

The third arrow — not in the original Buddhist metaphor — has been introduced in Compassion Focused Therapy (CFT). It represents the additional layer of self-accusation, self-devaluation, shame, and self-blame that many people add to their suffering.

Mathematically: Pain × Resistance × Self-attack = Suffering

2. Ajahn Sucitto on Peaceful Acceptance

“First of all, we should not react — not rage, not despair, or allow suffering to take up too much space in our thoughts. The first thing is *to draw a line around the suffering, take a step back, and know clearly: this is that.*”
— Ajahn Sucitto

“Patience holds us present with suffering in a spacious way and encourages the mind to open. And an open mind feels considerably more peaceful, and has better insight into the cause of suffering.”
— Ajahn Sucitto

2. Developing Peaceful Acceptance

Step 1 — Non-Identification: Stepping Back
Distancing without dissociation: remaining in contact with the experience without being submerged in it.
The image of a rushing river: standing on the bank, watching it flow — rather than being swept along in the current.

Step 2 — Meta-Level: Introspection
This step requires meta-awareness (*samprajñāna* / introspection): perceiving what is present and finding words for it. Naming it, finding words for it, strengthens the distancing. Examples: “This hurts.” “I could scream.” “This is really not what I wanted right now.”

Step 3 — Remembrance: An Aspect of Mindfulness
Remembering not to react with resistance or aversion — resistance amplifies suffering. Instead, practising being at peace with this. *“So it is. It is as it is.” / “I am practising being calm, being at peace with this.”* (This remembrance is what mindfulness (*smṛti*) includes and is a key meaning of the term.) Developing the power of peaceful acceptance and overcoming brainstem-driven modes.

2. Developing Peaceful Acceptance

The third step involves contextualisation, – three dimensions:
(1) **Here and now** — I am in resistance; how does this feel?
(2) **Recollection** — I intended to respond differently; now is the chance.
(3) **Releasing the judgment** that pain is inherently bad.

Caution: brief or extended contact, don't overwhelm, take small steps. If necessary, use *"grounding and resourcing"* (Tara Brach) as with trauma. Or the Four Steps model by Mingyur Rinpoche:

1. Accept
2. Take a step back, what lies behind this?
3. Choose a different object
4. Redirect attention ("away from the object"), e.g. go for a walk

2. Developing Peaceful Acceptance

Practice 1: The Five Reflections — Peaceful Acceptance Exercise

This practice is drawn from the Buddhist tradition of the Five Subjects for Frequent Reflection. Each statement acknowledges a fundamental aspect of human existence and pairs it with a deliberate intention to meet it with peace rather than resistance.

Practice Instruction (spoken)

A. It is my nature to grow old. I have not passed beyond ageing. When old age comes, I practise being at peace with it.
B. It is my nature to become ill. I have not passed beyond illness. When illness comes, I practise being at peace with it.
C. It is my nature to die. I have not passed beyond death. When death comes, I practise being at peace with it.
D. All things that are dear to me and that I hold precious will change and pass away. When this happens, I practise being at peace with it.
E. I will again and again encounter beings and situations that are unpleasant or painful. When this happens, I practise being at peace with it.

3. Empathy vs Compassion

Three Kinds of Empathy After Daniel Goleman

Daniel Goleman distinguishes three forms of empathy, each with a different function and a different relationship to compassion:

Cognitive empathy — The ability to understand another person's perspective — to know intellectually how they see things. Useful for communication and problem-solving, but can remain cool and detached.

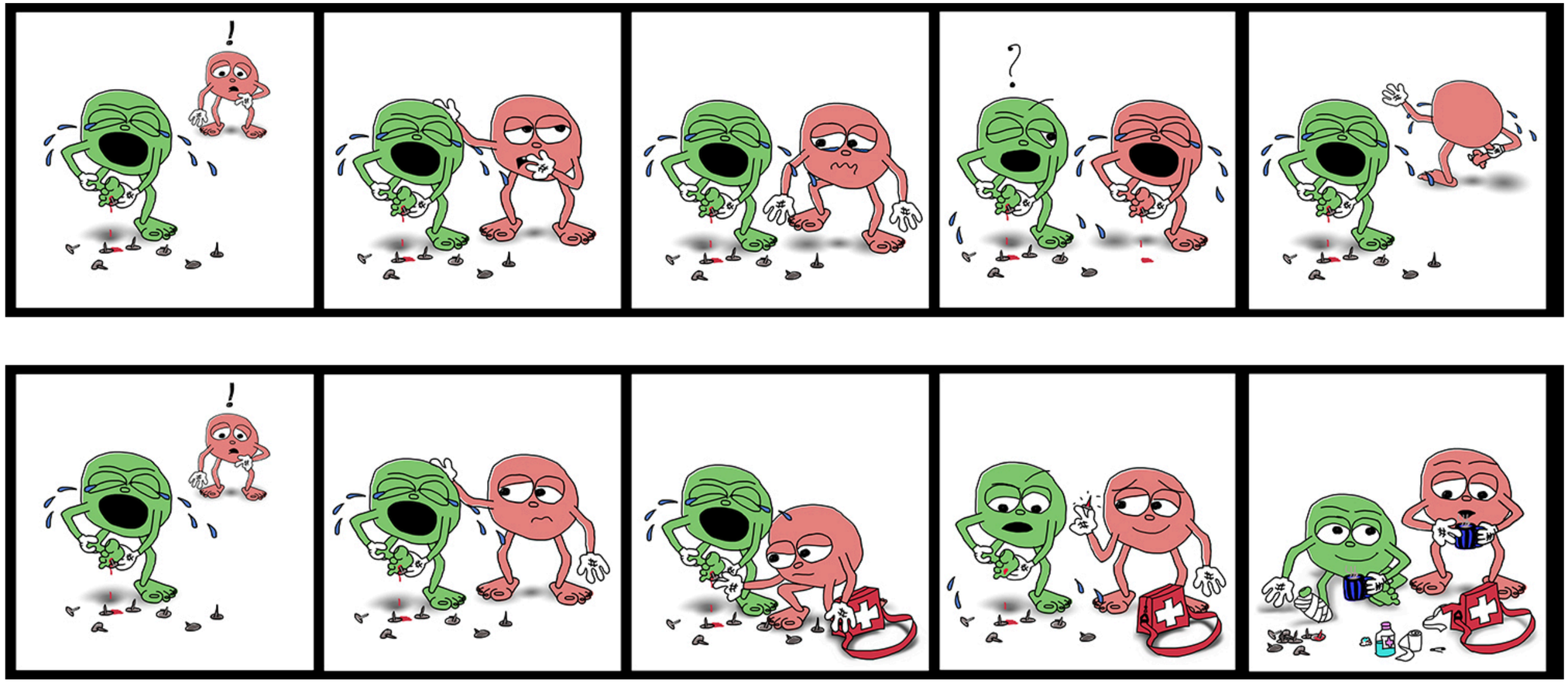
Emotional empathy — The ability to feel what someone else feels — to resonate with their emotional state (mirror neurons). Creates genuine connection, but carries the risk of emotional contagion and compassion fatigue.

Empathic concern — The ability to sense what another person needs from you — and to be moved to help. This is the closest to compassion: it combines feeling with the motivation to act.

Source: Daniel Goleman, *The Focused Leader*, Harvard Business Review, December 2013

Compassion *(karuṇa):*
the wish that oneself or other sentient beings may not experience suffering (or be free from it)

3. Empathy vs Compassion



3. Compassion vs. Pity

Pity — *"Oh, poor dear!"* — Sorry for your suffering, but at heart it remains your problem, not mine. More driven by disinterest or ignorance than genuine care. Not really wanting to relate to it or be touched by it.

Pity with superiority — Looking down on the suffering person from a position of feeling higher or better. Subtly demeaning — the object of that pity easily feels hurt, diminished, or put down.

Compassion — Standing alongside — neither above nor below, at eye level, neither merged nor too distant. Warm, present, in contact, and grounded in peaceful acceptance.

3. Compassion is like the evening sun

Compassion (karuṇā) meets pain and suffering — just as the evening sun meets the darkness. To not be swallowed by that darkness, compassion needs to go hand in hand with *peaceful acceptance*: the capacity *to be with* suffering, *to hold it*, without being overwhelmed by it, fleeing from it, or denying it — which are the typical responses of the threat system.

PAIN / SUFFERING

Three Unhelpful Responses

- Shame, harshness, self-criticism
- Absorption
- Isolation

Three Antidotes

- Self-kindness
- Mindfulness
- Common humanity

3. Self-Compassion

Practice 2: Kristin Neff — The Self-Compassion Break

A structured four-phrase practice for moments of difficulty, pain, or self-judgment. Each phrase can be adapted to your own words:

The first phrase, **This is a moment of suffering,** is designed to bring mindfulness to the fact that you're in pain. Other possible wordings are *I'm having a really tough time right now*, *This hurts*, or anything that describes the suffering you are experiencing.

The second phrase, **Suffering is a part of life,** reminds you that imperfection is part of the shared human experience. Other possible wordings are *Everyone feels this way sometimes*, *This is part of being human*, etc.

The third phrase, **May I be kind to myself in this moment,** helps bring a sense of caring concern to your present-moment experience. Other possible wordings are *May I love and support myself right now*, *May I accept myself as I am*, etc.

The final phrase, **May I give myself the compassion I need,** firmly sets your intention to be self-compassionate. You might use other words such as *May I remember that I am worthy of compassion*, *May I give myself the same compassion I would give to a good friend*, etc.

3. Self-Compassion

Practice 3: Christopher Germer — The Compassionate Look

Sit upright and at ease. Close your eyes if that feels comfortable. Take a few deep breaths. Bring to mind a situation in your life that tends to create stress in your body. Allow yourself to feel that stress fully.

The Compassionate Gaze
Now imagine the eyes of someone you consider deeply compassionate — perhaps a grandparent, a close friend, a mentor. You might also picture a photograph of someone who radiates compassion for you, or a kind imagined being. Allow yourself to rest in the gaze of this person — bathing in the warmth of a compassionate look.

The Compassionate Touch
Place one hand on the area of your body where you feel the stress. Feel the warmth. Allow kindness to flow through your fingers into the part of your body that is tense.

Compassionate Words
Think of the words you would most like to hear right now — encouraging, kind, comforting words. Whisper them to yourself in the warm, friendly way you would speak to someone you love deeply. Allow yourself to receive and rest in those words.

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