In essence, compassion is the wish that beings not suffer, and kindness is the wish that beings are happy – usually along with feelings of warmhearted caring. Did you know that studies show that people can increase these qualities in themselves, even changing their brains in the process? Would you like to be kinder and more compassionate – including with people who are challenging for you?

You can explore this by reflecting on and answering the questions below.

**For each question, try to find a response in one of these five categories:**

1 - strongly disagree | 2 - disagree | 3 - neither agree nor disagree | 4 - agree | 5 - strongly agree

A person's responses to questions like these are often more complex and nuanced than a single number can indicate. But for scoring purposes, for each question please choose the number above that is most accurate (or least inaccurate!).

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**QUESTIONS**

____ I regularly do some kind of inner practice in which I deliberately cultivate compassion and kindness.

____ I am very comfortable opening to the pain of others, and do not feel overwhelmed by it.

____ When I see people I don’t know who are suffering, such as a homeless person on the street or a photo of people affected by a natural disaster, I usually feel quite touched.

____ It’s easy and common for me to have a strong sense of the inner being of others – an inner being who is vulnerable, dealing with challenges, and longs for love and happiness.

____ Even if I disapprove of someone, such as an acquaintance or a political figure, when I hear about something bad happening to him or her such as getting cancer or losing a child, usually some compassion naturally arises in me without me consciously intending it.

____ I often do things from a feeling of caring for others.

____ It is easy and common for me to have warm, friendly, and kind feelings toward others.

____ If someone tells me about someone else who is suffering, usually it really affects me.

____ It is a priority for me to help others when I can.

____ Even when I can’t do anything to help people who are suffering, my caring feelings are still genuine and sincere.

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**SCORING**

Your responses to particular questions can be taken at face value, in their own right, as opportunities for seeing useful things about yourself, for investigating further – perhaps talking about them with others – and for identifying inner resources that would be good to develop further in yourself.

Additionally, it can be helpful to get an overall sense of where you stand. Add up your responses to each question to get your total score. See where your score fits in just below; please hold these descriptions lightly, but in a general sense it could well be true that:

40 - 50 You are a compassionate and kind person. You may be shy and introverted, or outgoing and extroverted, and you may express your compassion and kindness in your own ways – but you have a very warm heart and care a lot about others. You can sustain compassion and kindness for people you do not know, and even for those you disapprove of. You’re probably quick to see similarities between yourself and others, and the common nature of our pains and suffering. It is important to you that others get their needs met and flourish.

21 - 39 You certainly care about others. Still, you describe yourself as at most moderately compassionate and kind. Perhaps you are actually kinder than you think you are! Or perhaps you are preoccupied with other things. Nonetheless, it could be useful to you to deliberately practice and cultivate compassion and kindness.

10 - 20 You don’t portray yourself as very caring. If this is truly the case, what do you think you could do to warm up your heart? Many people who at one time were quite cool, detached, and unfeeling toward others have gradually become much more loving. Be aware of the suffering of others; imagine how bad you would feel if you lived their life and how much you would want the pain to lessen; see if you can find the sincere wish in yourself that their suffering lessen as well. Try to do at least one little thing each day that is kind, and explore what is enjoyable about this experience.

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