

30 September 2019

Dear Colleagues,

Welcome to week 7 of the Integrative Inquiry/Mindful Compassion Leadership class.

In preparation for this week's class, I am inviting you into a confidential check-in. Please take 5 minutes and go to this link and complete this quick check-in survey before our class, so that I know how to improve the rest of your time in this course -

[https://sdsu.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_daL99Zu76Ue3jIp](https://sdsu.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_daL99Zu76Ue3jIp)

Thank you!

For this week's INIQ/Mindful Compassion Leadership video.... It's one of my favorite topics... Compassion. This is not an easy topic for sure. Compassion practices are one of the most powerful neuroscience practices I have come across thus far in my career. Practicing compassion is often easy when practicing with those we love and next to impossible for those on the opposite end of the love spectrum. Yet, with practice, the impossible can become possible. Many wisdom teachers have declared that it is our lack of compassion that creates war, violent extremism, and the dehumanization of so many human beings. Not seeing each other first as a fellow human being means that it is easier to "out" people based on what is different about them. And when we "out" them, we give ourselves permission to treat them as less than human.

So, in this practice that I am inviting us into this week, I invite you to approach it from where you are with what you have; you don't have to begin the practice with the most difficult practices. And the most difficult practices may mean something different to each one of you. Please honor where you are – OK?

Also, because I am wearing white skin, I want to make the implicit explicit. The practice of seeing each other as human first is not intended to marginalize identities. However, I am aware that it can feel like that. Rather, the invitation to see each other first as human beings is to connect on a foundation of human dignity and worthiness. This connection first as human beings is meant to embody our interdependence on one another, on this environment, on what can be co-created in this world.

Martin Luther King said, "Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly. I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be, and you can never be what you ought to be until I am what I ought to be... This is the inter-related structure of reality."

Desmond Tutu said, "The fundamental law of human beings is interdependence. A person is a person through other persons."

Mother Theresa said, "I can do things you cannot, you can do things I cannot. Together we can do great things."

And finally, Thich Nhat Hanh said, “People normally cut reality into compartments, and so are unable to see the interdependence of all phenomena. To see one in all and all in one is to break through the great barrier which narrows one’s perception of reality.”

Connecting first as humans in this work does not mean we don’t disaggregate data by identities and intersection of identities to see who needs more of what when. Seeing each other as humans first does not mean we ignore social injustices. What it means is that we begin to see that injustice toward you as a human being is an injustice toward me as a human being. For example, if I experience challenge accessing a venue because of my disability, you experience challenge accessing that venue even though you may not identify as having a disability and could walk right in. When you are mistreated because of the color of your skin, I am mistreated because of the color of my skin even though my skin color is different from yours and I wasn’t mistreated.

This is a tricky topic for sure and something we will explore further in class this week. For now, the invitation is to trust that we can connect first as human beings without marginalizing identities. We connect on the injustice first as human beings and then we collectively figure out how to resolve it for those who are being detrimentally impacted, knowing all impact is not felt in the same way. If we don’t connect first as human beings, we risk simply perpetuating society’s power struggles – pushing each other around until the loudest and/or the strongest makes the rules (or changes the rules) that everyone else has to live by.

As Stephen Covey noted, “interdependence is a choice only independent people can make.” Compassion is a way of honoring our interdependence - of being in co-creation with each other.

See you soon.

In loving kindness,

*Marilee and Carol*