

Lesson One: *Who is the Dalai Lama, and how is he qualified to talk about compassion?*

Learning Objectives:

Students will:

- Define compassion.
- Produce a profile of the Dalai Lama.
- Recognize the qualifications that enable him to speak on compassion.
- Demonstrate an awareness of the Dalai Lama's qualities.
- Cooperatively research, plan, and produce a profile of the Dalai Lama that addresses the critical question.
- Understand the definition of compassion and be able to use the word appropriately.

Critical question: *How is the Dalai Lama qualified to talk about compassion?*

Introduction / Opening:

In a group discussion, ask students to define compassion and then have someone consult a dictionary for its definition and etymology.

Read the following quotation giving time for students to silently reflect:

“Love and compassion are necessities, not luxuries. Without them humanity cannot survive.” – The 14th Dalai Lama

Have students compose a short journal entry about the quotation and offer these prompts:

- *How do you feel about this quote?*
- *What would a world without compassion look like? Could this world survive?*
- *Where do you see compassion in your world?*
- *Where have you practiced or received compassion?*

Dalai Lama study:

Do a KWL¹ exercise with students about the Dalai Lama. Find out:

- What do they know about the Dalai Lama.
- What do they want to know about the Dalai Lama.

Consider these questions:

- *What is a Dalai Lama?*
- *Where does the present Dalai Lama live?*
- *Where did he live?*

¹ KWL is a strategy in which students manage their learning by mapping out what they Know, Want to know, and Learned. KWL charts help students access prior knowledge and help teachers assess where students are in their learning.

Compassion Lessons
Grades 9-12

- *What does he represent?*
- *Is he easily recognizable?*
- *What makes him recognizable?*

Provide students with a copy of the article *Bearing Blessings* (visit: <http://www.vsb.bc.ca/districtinfo/organization/ls/compassion/lessonactivities.htm> and click on the Bearing Blessings link in the second cell in the first table you see. This will take you to a pdf of this article). In small groups, have students use the article and websites or articles from other media to produce a profile of the Dalai Lama. The profile should answer these questions:

- *What is it about the Dalai Lama that makes him a leader?*
- *What is the Dalai Lama's significance as a world leader?*
- *Compare and contrast his status as a world leader with a world leader of your choosing.*
- *What are some of the Dalai Lama's central messages?*
- *What is the relative importance of the Dalai Lama as a non-sectarian spiritual leader?*

Wrap-up:

Return to the critical question. Ask students:

- *“How is the Dalai Lama qualified to talk about compassion?”*

Use these as prompts if necessary:

- *What do you find most compelling in the Dalai Lama's story?*
- *How is his story relevant to your life?*
- *How would the Dalai Lama react to the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina (or other more relevant catastrophic event)?*
- *Why does the Dalai Lama have a worldwide following?*

Revisit the KWL exercise and have students reflect on and share what they now know about the Dalai Lama.

Lesson Two: *Who are the heroes of compassion?*

Learning objectives:

Students will:

- Identify heroes of compassion.
- Produce a profile of Bishop Desmond Tutu.
- Recognize the qualifications that make him a hero of compassion.
- Research, plan, and share information about BDT's life and work.

Critical question: *Who are the heroes of compassion?*

Introduction / Opening:

Have students close their eyes and ask them to concentrate on what you are saying. Say the word "hero" and pause for one minute. Have them open their eyes and write for two minutes about what they were thinking of when they heard the word "hero."

Repeat with the word "compassion."

Repeat with "hero of compassion."

Conduct a class discussion about what they were thinking of as they heard the words and phrases.

- *Who are the heroes of society?*
- *Who are your heroes?*
- *What makes someone a hero of compassion?*
- *Who are the heroes of compassion (past and present)?*
- *Are you a hero of compassion?*

Study:

The Dalai Lama is seen as a hero of compassion; Bishop Desmond Tutu is also. Provide students with a copy of the biography of Bishop Desmond Tutu from achievement.org (<http://www.achievement.org/autodoc/page/tut0bio-1>). If students have internet access, consider directing them to some audio clips of interviews with him (<http://www.achievement.org/autodoc/page/tut0int-1>). In small groups or individually, have students produce a profile of Bishop Tutu as a hero of compassion. The profile should address these questions:

- *What actions, ideas, and qualities have made him a hero of compassion?*
- *How was he different from others around him? Why was he awarded a Nobel Prize and others were not?*
- *Bishop Tutu is a religious leader. What message does he have for people who do not embrace his religious beliefs?*

Compassion Lessons
Grades 9-12

Have students decide what medium they will use to share the learning from their segment with the class (e.g., powerpoint, skit, interview, monologue, debate, etc.), focusing on how Bishop Tutu is a hero of compassion.

Wrap-up:

Display this quotation from Bishop Desmond Tutu:

“If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor. If an elephant has its foot on the tail of a mouse and you say that you are neutral, the mouse will not appreciate your neutrality.”

Have students reflect on this quotation through reflective journal writing, poetry, sketching, composing lyrics, etc. Use these prompts:

- *Think of a time when you wish you had been a hero of compassion but remained neutral. Describe what you felt, why you acted how you did, and what you wish you had done instead.*
- *Visualize how the situation could have been different if you had been a hero of compassion. Rewrite the ending with you as a hero of compassion.*

If students are comfortable sharing their reflections, have them do so.

Close with a discussion of the quote itself. Do you agree that if you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor? How does that apply to situations in our school and in our community?

Lesson Three: *What role does compassion have in our justice system?*

Learning Objectives:

Students will:

- Analyze the role of compassion in the criminal justice system.
- Differentiate the role of compassion in and out of prisons.
- Compare and contrast the outcomes of two compassionate criminal sentences.

Critical question: *What role does compassion have in our justice system?*

Introduction / Opening:

Read the following quotation by Bishop Desmond Tutu, giving time for students to silently reflect:

“A person is a person because he recognizes others as persons.”

Explain the concept of “**Ubuntu**” to which Tutu is referring. Ubuntu is a traditional African philosophy that explains how we relate to the world. According to Ubuntu, we all share a common bond, and it is through our interactions with others that we discover our own human qualities. Tutu describes Ubuntu further:

“I am human because I belong. It [Ubuntu] speaks about wholeness, it speaks about compassion. A person with Ubuntu is welcoming, hospitable, warm and generous, willing to share. Such people are open and available to others, willing to be vulnerable, affirming of others, do not feel threatened that others are able and good, for they have a proper self-assurance that comes from knowing that they belong in a greater whole. They know that they are diminished when others are humiliated, diminished when others are oppressed, diminished when others are treated as if they were less than who they are. The quality of Ubuntu gives people resilience, enabling them to survive and emerge still human despite all efforts to dehumanize them.”

Reread the quote:

“A person is a person because he recognizes others as persons.” (Tutu)

Have students compose a short journal entry about the quotation and offer these prompts:

- *Think of a time when you felt you were not recognized as a person. What did you feel like? How could the situation have been improved?*
- *Look at our society (school, neighborhood, city/town, state, country, world) and think of examples where we do not recognize our brothers and sisters as persons. Why does this occur? What would make it different?*

Compassion Lessons
Grades 9-12

- *Do we recognize prisoners as persons? Should we? What would it look like if we did?*

Have students share their thoughts with a neighbor.

Criminal justice study:

Present the story of Eric:

“If I hadn’t gotten myself some treatment, I’d be dead today. No doubt about it.” Eric used to drink 12 40-oz. beers a day. His life was a blur as he looked for his next high. He couldn’t hold down a job. His family had long since abandoned him. He was arrested for a minor drug charge and agreed to go to drug court (an alternative to prison). Eric had to attend several treatment sessions per week and participate in two AA or NA groups per week. He had one on one sessions with counselors and weekly drug tests. Judge MacInnes saw Eric twice a month to monitor his progress. After a year, he graduated from drug court. He turned his life around, and his criminal charges were dismissed. He reunited with his family. Eric found a job and received a promotion. Most importantly, he is alive.

Pose these questions to the class:

- *Judge MacInness could have sent Eric to prison. Why might she have offered Eric a more “compassionate” alternative?*
- *How was the compassionate alternative beneficial to Eric? How was it beneficial to society?*
- *What allowed Eric to be successful?*
- *What does Eric’s story tell us about when to exercise compassion in the justice system? When should compassion be withheld?*

Present the story of Stephen:

Stephen was almost 18 years old. He had a substantial history of behavior problems at school and had several minor scrapes with the law until recently when he was starting serious fights weekly at school. In January a teacher tried to intervene, and Stephen broke his rib. The school could no longer handle him, and the streets offered too many temptations. He had been arrested several times on drug possession charges.

Instead of sending Stephen to prison where many with similar histories become career criminals, a team of professionals worked with Stephen to help treat the underlying issues. Prosecutors, social workers, psychologists, psychiatrists, teachers, and drug counselors worked with Stephen in treatment court. Stephen was an outstanding participant. He didn’t miss a session; his drug tests were negative; he was making progress reducing his aggressive behavior and understanding how to cope with his volatile emotions. After 12 months of steady improvements, he graduated from treatment court, and his record was cleared. He was a star of the system; the prosecutor even gave him a hug. He had turned his life around. The next week he was arrested for raping a stranger. The evidence was clear; Stephen went to prison for five years.

Compassion Lessons
Grades 9-12

Have students develop a T-Chart which compares and contrasts the two situations, outcomes, and the role of compassion.

Pose these questions to the class:

- *The judge could have sent Stephen to prison on his drug charges. Why did the judge offer Stephen a more “compassionate” alternative?*
- *How was the compassionate alternative beneficial to Stephen? How was it beneficial to society?*
- *What allowed Stephen to be successful during his 12 month treatment?*
- *What might have caused Stephen to quickly behave “without compassion” when his treatment was over?*
- *Eric and Stephen were both given compassionate options within a justice system that is typically more punitive. The outcomes with the two men were very different. What could have made the difference?*
- *What does Stephen’s story tell us about when to exercise compassion in the justice system? When should compassion be withheld? Is your answer different than earlier when you had only heard about Eric? Why or why not?*
- *Is a justice system without compassion just?*

Find a local criminal story and share it with the class. Debate how compassion should be exercised in this case. Follow the case as it moves through the criminal justice system.

Wrap-up:

Display this quote:

“I am in the hole [solitary confinement] because an officer said my shoe wasn’t tied. I told him that it was. He said, ‘Boy, tie your damn shoe.’ I told him that my name wasn’t ‘boy.’ I was given 30 days for disobeying a direct order. You religious people talk about mercy, but I don’t think it exists.”
[from article in *Sojourner* (Sept-Oct 2007; p28; Sehested, N.)]

Lead a discussion with these prompts if needed:

- *Should mercy / compassion exist in prisons? Why or why not?*
- *Are there crimes that deserve no compassion?*
- *How are the “rules” about compassion different in prisons?*
- *The man who said the quote above began with, “When will it be enough? When will I have paid my debt? No matter what I do, it doesn’t matter.” Do criminals deserve a clean slate once they have served their time?*
- *Should we have to provide a criminal background check to sign a lease for an apartment?*
- *Should convicted felons be allowed to vote? Why or why not?*

Have students do a reflection (reflective journal writing, poetry, sketch, compose lyrics) on the day’s lesson and share it with a neighbor.

Lesson Four: *Can forgiveness bring peace?*

Learning Objectives:

Students will:

- Understand the role that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission played in building a foundation for post-apartheid South Africa.
- Reflect upon personal experiences with forgiveness.
- Reflect upon the role of forgiveness in reconciliation.
- Assume an identity and write an opinion letter arguing for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Critical question: *Can forgiveness bring peace?*

Introduction / Opening:

Have students write for five minutes about a personal experience with forgiveness – either as the victim or perpetrator in an incident. Use the following prompts if necessary:

- *What role did forgiveness play in your experience?*
- *Should we forgive? If so, under what circumstances?*
- *Should we be forgiven when we are in the wrong? If so, under what circumstances?*
- *Is forgiveness ever a mistake?*

Study of Truth and Reconciliation Commission:

1. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)

South Africa took a unique approach to dealing with the apartheid-era crimes, and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was an important element of the process. The TRC sought to embrace the principles in its name – finding the truth of the past and promoting reconciliation for the future – as a means of rebuilding the nation. *Provide students with some background information on the TRC.*

From the BBC News: The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was established to investigate crimes committed during the apartheid era in South Africa.

The commission oversaw three committees dealing with the following areas:

- Human rights violations
- Reparations
- Amnesty

The 1995 Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act, which set up the commission, states that the commission's aims are to investigate and provide "as complete a picture as possible of the nature, causes and extent of gross violations of human rights."

Anybody who felt he or she had been a victim of violence could come forward and be heard at the TRC. Perpetrators of violence could also give testimony and request amnesty from prosecution.

Amnesty could be granted "to those who make full disclosure of all the relevant facts relating to acts associated with a political objective committed in the course of the conflicts of the past."

The TRC was open to perpetrators from both sides of the apartheid divide. Applications have come from police, black militants, right-wing activists and others.

The commission was concerned with activities that happened in the period from March 1, 1960 until May 10, 1994, the day of President Mandela's inauguration.

It was chaired by Archbishop Desmond Tutu, and hearings began in April 1996.

The commission received over 7,000 applications for amnesty. The TRC rejected more than 5,000 of these applications and has granted around 850 amnesties.

The commission heard testimony from over 21,000 victims of apartheid.

2. Discussion of forgiveness by Bishop Desmond Tutu, chair of the TRC.

Display this statement of Bishop Tutu's:

"Forgiveness and reconciliation are not cheap, they are costly. Forgiveness is not to condone or minimize the awfulness of an atrocity or wrong. It is to recognize its ghastliness but to choose to acknowledge the essential humanity of the perpetrator and to give that perpetrator the possibility of making a new beginning. Forgiveness is an act of much hope and not despair. It is to hope in the essential goodness of people and to have faith in their potential to change. It is to bet on that possibility. Forgiveness, is not opposed to justice, especially if it is not punitive justice, but restorative justice, justice that does not seek primarily to punish the perpetrator, to hit out, but looks to heal a breach, to restore a social equilibrium that the atrocity or misdeed has disturbed. Ultimately there is no future without forgiveness." (2001)

Lead a discussion about this quote:

- *Do you agree that forgiveness does not minimize the atrocity of the action? Why or why not?*
- *Do you agree that forgiveness is not opposed to justice? Why or why not?*
- *Should we have a system of restorative justice? Why or why not?*
- *Do you agree that there is no future without forgiveness? Why or why not?*

3. The story of Linda Biehl

Give students some context:

On August 25, 1993, Amy Biehl, an American Fulbright scholar working in South Africa against apartheid, was beaten and stabbed to death in a black township near Cape Town. In 1998 the four youths convicted of her murder were granted amnesty by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) after serving five years of their sentence – a decision that was supported by Amy’s parents, Linda and Peter. Easy Nofemela and Ntobeko Peni, two of the convicted men, now work for the Amy Biehl Foundation Trust in Cape Town, a charity which dedicates its work to putting up barriers against violence. Linda still regularly returns to Cape Town to carry on her work with the Foundation.

From <http://www.theforgivenessproject.com/stories/linda-biehl-easy-nofemela>

Have one student assume the role of Linda Biehl, Amy’s mom, and read her story aloud.

Linda Biehl’s story:

When we heard the terrible news about Amy the whole family was devastated, but at the same time we wanted to understand the circumstances surrounding her death. Soon afterwards we left for Cape Town.

We took our strength in handling the situation directly from Amy. She was intensely involved in South African politics and even though the violence leading up to free elections had caused her death, we didn’t want to say anything negative about South Africa’s journey to democracy. Therefore, in 1998, when the four men convicted of her murder applied for amnesty, we did not oppose it. At the amnesty hearing we shook hands with the families of the perpetrators. Peter spoke for both of us when he quoted from an editorial Amy had written for the Cape Times: “the most important vehicle of reconciliation is open and honest dialogue,” he said. “We are here to reconcile a human life which was taken without an opportunity for dialogue. When we are finished with this process we must move forward with linked arms.” A year after Easy and Ntobeko were released from prison, an anthropologist who was interviewing them sent us a message to say they’d like to meet with us. They were running a youth club in Guguletu Township where Amy had been killed and wanted to show us their work.

We wanted to meet them. It wasn’t about pity or blame, but about understanding. We wanted to know what it would take to make things better. Some time later we took them out to dinner. We talked about their lives and our lives, but we didn’t ask about the past. We were all looking to the future.

I’ve grown fond of these boys. I enjoy them. They’re like my own kids. It may sound strange, but I tend to think there’s a little bit of Amy’s spirit in them. Some people think we are supporting criminals, but the Foundation that we started in her name is all about preventing crime among youth.

Compassion Lessons
Grades 9-12

I have come to believe passionately in restorative justice. It's what Desmond Tutu calls 'ubuntu' - to choose to forgive rather than demand retribution, a belief that "my humanity is inextricably caught up in yours."

I can't look at myself as a victim – it diminishes me as a person. And Easy and Ntobeko don't see themselves as killers. They didn't set out to kill Amy Biehl. But Easy has told me that it's one thing to reconcile what happened as a political activist, quite another to reconcile it in your heart.

Have another student assume the role of Easy Nofemela, one of Amy's murderers, and read his story aloud:

Easy Nofemela's story:

When the anthropologist suggested bringing the Biehls to meet me, my mind was racing. This was a big challenge. I'd grown up being taught never to trust a white person, and I didn't know what to make of them. Yet I thought that if I could meet them face to face, then perhaps they might see that I was sorry. "Yes, bring them," I said.

The next day Peter came to Guguletu. I was very nervous, but my first thought was to protect him because there was violence outside. I took him inside my home and told him about the youth club. He was very interested and said Linda would love to see what me and Ntobeko were doing. The next day they came bringing us t-shirts and tickets for Robben Island. I remember Peter was very strong and Linda very shy.

Later we became involved in the Amy Biehl Foundation because they were having trouble in Guguletu where they ran a community baking project. Crime had become so bad in the township that drivers were getting shot at every day. We helped them by talking to the community.

Not until I met Linda and Peter Biehl did I understand that white people are human beings, too. I was a member of APLA – the armed wing of the PAC. Our slogan was "one settler, one bullet."² The first time I saw them on TV, I hated them. I thought this was the strategy of the whites - to come to South Africa to call for capital punishment. But they didn't even mention wanting to hang us. I was very confused. They seemed to understand that the youth of the townships had carried this crisis – this fight for liberation – on their shoulders.

At first I didn't want to go to the TRC to give my testimony. I thought it was a sell-out, but then I read in the press that Linda and Peter had said that it was not up to them to forgive - it was up to the people in South Africa to learn to forgive each

² PAC was the Pan Africanist Congress, a South African movement that helped end apartheid. "One settler, one bullet" was the rallying cry of the armed wing of the PAC movement. Essentially, the slogan was calling for attacks on whites who were participating in the oppression of blacks, and some even interpreted it as all whites. This philosophy of one settler, one bullet was Easy and Ntobeko's motivation for murdering Amy Biehl – she was another settler. The TRC granted them amnesty because their crime was deemed political.

Compassion Lessons
Grades 9-12

other. I decided to go and tell our story and show remorse. Amnesty wasn't my motivation. I just wanted to ask for forgiveness. I wanted to say in front of Linda and Peter, face to face, "I am sorry, can you forgive me?" I wanted to be free in my mind and body. It must have been so painful for them to lose their daughter, but by coming to South Africa – not to speak of recrimination, but to speak of the pain of our struggle – they gave me back my freedom.

I am not a killer, I have never thought of myself as such, but I will never belong to a political organization again because such organizations dictate your thoughts and actions. I now passionately believe that things will only change through dialogue. People are shocked I work for the Amy Biehl Foundation Trust. I tell them that I work here because Peter and Linda came to South Africa to talk about forgiveness.

Peter was a lovely man. He kept us all happy. It was a great shock when he died. He would say to Ntobeko and me, "I love you guys. Are you happy, guys?" He tried to avoid things that would upset us. He was like a grandfather to us.

Lead a discussion of forgiveness using the stories of Linda and Easy. Use these prompts if needed:

- *Could you have done what Linda and Peter Biehl did? Why or why not?*
- *What does Tutu mean when he says, "my humanity is inextricably caught up in yours?" How does that relate to Linda Biehl's story?*
- *Why does Linda not think of herself as a victim?*
- *Why did Easy choose to meet with the Biehls? If you were Easy, would you have done that?*
- *Why did Easy choose to go before the TRC?*
- *Why did Easy want to ask for forgiveness?*
- *What did Easy learn from the Biehls?*
- *What do you take away from this story?*
- *Read the following quote from Paul Boese: "Forgiveness does not change the past, but it does enlarge the future."*

Wrap-up:

The TRC had many opponents. Have students choose either Linda or Easy. As Linda or Easy, write a letter, make a speech, draw a cartoon, or create a drawing that makes an argument for forgiveness and for "Truth and Reconciliation."

Lesson Five: *How do our choices have global consequences?*

Learning objectives:

Students will:

- Describe an ecological footprint.
- Trace and report the path of a consumer good from source to consumption.
- Analyze the global impact of a personal consumer choice.
- Reflect on one's ecological footprint as it relates to consumer choice.

Critical question: *How do our choices have global consequences?*

Introduction / Opening:

Explain the concept of an **ecological footprint**:

The ecological footprint is a measure of the area needed to support a population's lifestyle. This includes the land and water needed to produce the resources consumed and to absorb the waste.

Show this map in which the territory size shows the proportion of the worldwide ecological footprint made there:

<http://www.worldmapper.org/display.php?selected=322>

➤ *What catches your eye as you look at this map?*

Humanity's Ecological Footprint is over 23% larger than what the planet can regenerate. In other words, it now takes more than one year and two months for the Earth to regenerate what we use in a single year. (from

<http://www.footprintnetwork.org>)

The per person footprint in the United States is almost five times the world average, and almost ten times what would be sustainable (from www.worldmapper.org).

If enough computers are available, have students find out their individual ecological footprint by completing the questionnaire at:

<http://www.earthday.net/Footprint/index.asp>

Display this quote from the Dalai Lama:

“But I am only an ordinary human being...no matter what our situation, whether we are rich or poor, educated or not, of one race, gender, religion, or another, we all desire to be happy and to avoid suffering. Our every intended action, in a sense, our whole life – how we choose to live it...can be seen as our answer to the great question which confronts us all: How am I to be happy?”

Compassion Lessons
Grades 9-12

Lead a discussion around these issues using the following as prompts if needed:

- *You are a resident of the United States. The United States is rapidly consuming resources more quickly than they are renewed, and much more rapidly than other parts of the world. Does this impact your life? Should it impact your life? Whose life does it most impact?*
- *Can your consumer choices express compassion? How? Should your consumer choices express compassion? Why or why not? Visit: www.globalexchange.org to learn more.*
- *The Dalai Lama states that we all desire to be happy and avoid suffering. Reflect on how your happiness is dependent upon the happiness other people. If people across the globe are allowed to suffer, how might that impact the happiness of all? Do we have a responsibility to make sure that our happiness does not cause others' suffering?*

Study:

Have students develop a **Consumer Back to Source** creative presentation in which they choose a product they consume and address the questions below. Have them collectively present their learnings in some public way. The presentation might be a mural of poetry, art, or photography; or a celebration with songs and readings, etc.

- *Where was it made?*
- *Who made it?*
- *What are the working conditions where it was made?*
- *What are the living conditions of the workers who made it?*
- *What is it made of?*
- *Were any chemicals used?*
- *Where do the chemicals come from?*
- *What are the dangers of working with and /or consuming these chemicals?*
- *Do these chemicals affect the local and global environment?*
- *How did it get to the store (all routes)?*
- *Was any living organism affected by my choice to consume this product?*

Wrap-up:

Have students do a reflection (reflective journal writing, poetry, sketch, compose lyrics) about their Consumer Back to Source learning. Use these prompts:

- *What did you learn in your Consumer Back to Source project that surprised you? Did it change any consumer choices you make?*
- *Do you think your consumer choices have global consequences? Are you happy with the global consequences that you are affecting?*
- *Do you use compassion in your consumer decisions? Should you?*
- *How do you see you and your friends investing in collective change?*