

Compassion vs. Competition

In our fast-paced American culture, we oftentimes learn, not always by intention, to be competitive. This is stressed in sports and is an undertone in much of the media (i.e., having the "perfect" body), and is common in schools and businesses. Competition becomes such a huge part of people's lives that, in some cases, they find they are constantly trying to "keep up with the Jones'."

There are healthy forms of competition which help us to strive to be better people in terms of setting our goals and being productive. However, there are many problems associated with excessive competition.

One may find that once they "beat out" one person, there is someone else who has something more, and the behavior continues. Also, excessive competition can separate us from other people, which is contrary to the basic human social need of bonding with others.

A person oftentimes doesn't realize that he or she actually is competing with him or herself because nothing ever is enough. As a person finds himself in constant competition, he may also find an inner loneliness and lack of connection with himself and others.

In many eastern cultures, community is taught as opposed to competition. They stress that peace and contentment within oneself is the key to success (as opposed to money and power).

How can one begin to find this inner happiness?

Quieting our busy minds, sitting and turning our attention within ourselves, we can begin to evaluate our lives and be more self-aware of issues that plague us, thus finding more inner peace. By understanding ourselves more, we learn to become less critical and more compassionate toward ourselves. Further, as we do this, we learn to appreciate others and practice compassion toward them also. As the old saying goes "understand yourself in order to better understand others."

We can also begin to learn more about ourselves by helping others. Volunteering or serving the needs of others helps us understand their humanity and thus better understand our own humanity, finding that, as people, we are all more alike than we originally thought.

As adults practicing compassion, we teach our children to be compassionate with themselves and with others. Consider the ways this can positively impact our children's lives (improving self-esteem and reversing negative behaviors such as criticizing, self-doubt name-calling, or bullying).

If children can feel better about themselves now, imagine how much healthier and happier they will be as adults!

GARY BREUER, MA, LPC



My private practice is located in North Scottsdale, within the offices of PsychArizona. I work with children (ages 6 and older), pre-teens, adolescents and adults. I work with individuals, couples and families with issues of anxiety, depression, trauma, grief and loss, career, academic and workplace issues, relationship issues, LGBT concerns, personal growth and spirituality.

I use various therapeutic approaches depending on the needs of the client. These approaches include developmental, humanistic, cognitive-behavioral, existential, family-systems, mindfulness-based, transpersonal, and EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing). EMDR is a model used for the treatment of trauma, and has also been found to be successful in the treatment of various other disorders as well.

I have experience providing professional counseling in clinical, business, and school settings.

Apart from my private practice, I am also a Reiki Master and have a great appreciation and respect for alternative as well as conventional treatment approaches.

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