



Dear Global Compassionate Systems Community and fellow human beings,

This is obviously a time of great disruption. What to most of us is less evident is the opportunity this breakdown presents. We are pushed to learn, work and connect in new ways, and we have a choice of how we want to show up and be with ourselves and with each other. For all of us who are part of education, the necessity to shift to virtual and distant learning modalities can also be a time of great learning for the longer-term transformations that we all care about.

These opportunities start with recognizing that while the responses from various governments around the world for containing the virus vary, we share our innate human response system. Most of will experience elevated anxiety, perhaps we become emotionally aggravated more easily, and we will worry naturally about our loved ones, about our way of life and about the future.

But while our circumstances and innate reactions may be similar, learning is always optional, and here is where the compassionate systems framework and tools can help. Whether or not the opportunities now present actually become seeds of real change starts with ourselves as individuals and the social fields we help generate. The tools and approaches of "compassionate systems awareness" can help to stabilize a greater sense of connectedness and grounding. We are not alone. All people today are facing similar feelings and fears. The skills to cultivate well-being – awareness, connection, insight and purpose - that apply in all settings, are especially important now.

For example, the "systems thinking iceberg" can help us with the insight needed to remain oriented toward the deeper systemic sources of the disruptions. It is natural that times of anxiety drive us to focus on immediate events and away from the deeper structures that have brought us to this degree of vulnerability. Yet, if there is anything here of real value to our children and future generations it lies precisely in considering how the complexity and inter-dependence of our present ways of living in the world call for a level of trust and mutuality that we have not yet learned how to sustain. We have placed our faith in technology rather than in cultivating human relationships and our lived sense of connectedness. We are all facing fundamentally the same challenges today – from climate change to inequity to giving away attention to social media - and we are not likely to make it pitted against one another. This can be a reminder that we do not have to agree to care for each other and to seek ways of living that do not put one another at risk.

Blaming "the other" is tempting but misses the point of seeking to understand the deeper sources – the underlying structure - of problems in which we all have a part. It is time for us all to wake up to the simple fact that, whether we like it or not, to a degree unique in human history, we live today in a single fabric of mutuality. This is the lesson our grandchildren are hoping we learn in this crisis and use to guide our choices, now and in the future.



Though the Center for Systems Awareness is only a few years old, we have been growing steadily as a global community. Some of us work quite closely with one another. Some have just attended one workshop and have begun to work to bring the tools and ideas back into their school, school system or community-based organization. And whether we recognize it or not, right now, we are all much more tangibly connected - in Indonesia, Thailand, China, India, Jordan, Denmark, Canada and the US - bringing compassionate systems awareness to a global situation that most certainly needs it.

Systems awareness is not an abstraction or philosophical ideal. It is a simple way to point at a fundamental condition of our existence. Compassion arises naturally when we hold this condition as our lived reality and notice how we feel about the people and other species with whom we share this reality. We encourage everyone to practice, for example - noticing how the concerns and fears that show up for me are the same as are arising for everyone right now. This extends to decisions people have made that we think are ungrounded or unproductive - even if we disapprove, we can allow ourselves a mindful moment to reflect with compassion on how we chose to show up and see that it is always an option to be present in a kind and generous way. Choosing how we intend to be is a profound gesture of personal mastery. As the Dalai Lama puts it, "The world has enough suffering. It does not need mine added to it."

A recent note from our friend and colleague Richie Davidson, founder of the Center for Healthy Minds at the University of Wisconsin and developer of the well-being framework mentioned above, reminded us also to take the time for basic acknowledgement practices focused on

- how working remotely or from homes today is a compassionate act aimed to benefit others,
- the contributions of those around us and all they are doing to help in this time, and
- how extraordinarily interconnected we are today, a reflection of our "intertwined nature."

Last, knowing how stretched educators are everywhere to move quickly to virtual or online education, we are working on creating a support process for integrating the basic tools and ideas of compassionate systems into online classrooms, so that teachers and students may engage in compassionate systems approaches also in their virtual school. We will produce a series of weekly online sessions on key tools and practical tips and are working with some of our master educator practitioners to explore a possible 'buddy system' to extend their support. We will have more on that soon - please let us know please let us know your level of interest.



We are also taking this opportunity for online design meetings with the compassionate systems student ambassadors around how education can become a meaningful journey for young people in this particular inflection point in becoming interconnected, systems-aware, caring global citizens.

We will keep you all posted as this take shape in the next few day and how it can be extended with your students.

Much love, support and healing to all sentient being in this time of crisis and breakdown,

From Peter and Mette

