

Practicing Compassion with Those Who Mistreat Us

From zenhabits.net



An important stage of practicing compassion is to not only want to ease the suffering of those we love and meet, but even those who may have mistreated us in some way. When we encounter someone who mistreats us, instead of acting in anger, consider withdrawing. Later, when you are calm and more detached, reflect on that person who mistreated you. Try to imagine the background of that person. Try to imagine what that person was taught as a child. Try to imagine the day or week that person was going through, and what has happened to that person. Try to imagine the mood and state of mind that person was in — the suffering that person must have been going through to mistreat you that way. And understand that their action was not about you, but about what they were going through.

Now think some more about the suffering of that person, and see if you can imagine trying to stop that suffering. Then reflect that if you mistreated someone, and they acted with kindness and compassion toward you, whether that would make you less likely to mistreat that person the next time, and more likely to be kind. Once you have mastered this practice of reflection, try acting with compassion and understanding the next time a person mistreats you. Do it in little doses, until you are good at it. Practice makes perfect.