



Framework for Action

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NOTE: As you read this, please keep an eye out for areas of expertise or interest where you feel you might have connections or suggestions for further exploration.

Preamble

The nonprofit Global Compassion Coalition (GCC) is committed to *using the power of compassion to accelerate effective collective action*. This document is intended to act as a foundational set of guidelines to help orient the GCC toward the most effective collective actions possible to alleviate or eliminate sources of suffering.

This may be considered as a declaration of where we stand in relation to the different sets of values and positions taken by different constituencies around the world. We welcome all those who recognize their own values and guiding principles in this declaration to choose to stand with us.

Background

As [described by](#) one of our founding Board members, Paul Gilbert, humans have lived according to principles of “caring and sharing” for more than 95% of our species’ history. Compared with other species, humans are naturally driven by high levels of altruism and compassion in our behavior. Over millions of years, these qualities emerged as evolutionary adaptations for the hominids who preceded *Homo sapiens* in the African savanna. With an evolved sense of group identity and solidarity, our ancestors developed sophisticated social technologies to regulate the occasional freeloaders driven primarily by selfishness and greed, which were considered dangerous and unnatural behaviors.

With the rise of hierarchies and patriarchal values in settled, agrarian societies, our evolved traits of “caring and sharing” were superseded by traits of “holding and controlling.” Over millennia, these have become globally pervasive. Cultural and societal systems emerged over the past 5,000 years that have

thwarted and distorted intrinsic human values, inciting selfish, violent, and dominating behaviors, which are now widely accepted as societal norms.

However, what is currently accepted as “normal” behavior is in fact an abnormal regression from the prosocial practices and values that have caused humankind to flourish on the Earth.

Drawing on the wisdom of Indigenous cultures, the world’s great spiritual traditions, and the findings of modern science, the GCC calls for a worldwide restoration of the goodness that is innate in our species. We invite all who read this to come home again, to the worldview and values that allowed our species to thrive.

Here, we summarize our own analysis as well as the work of many others, to identify the main, systemic sources of unnecessary suffering in the world today and recommend opportunities for change.

Recommended Further Reading:

[*Humankind: A Hopeful History*](#) by Rutger Bregman

[*The Myth of Normal: Trauma, Illness, & Healing in a Toxic Culture*](#) by Gabor Maté

[*Nurturing Our Humanity: How Domination and Partnership Shape Our Brains, Lives, and Future*](#) by Riane Eisler and Douglas P. Fry

Framework for Action

Our Worldview

We are profoundly interconnected. Every community, culture, and ecosystem is part of a larger web of life, where the well-being of one affects the well-being of all. Compassion (understood as the recognition of suffering coupled with the commitment to alleviate and prevent it) is both a moral foundation and a practical guide for navigating global challenges.

The GCC envisions a world where compassion is not confined to personal virtue but is embedded in institutions, economies, cultures, and policies. A world shaped by compassion is one where human dignity, justice, and care for the Earth are non-negotiable foundations of collective living.

Our Core Values

Human Dignity

Every person, regardless of ethnicity, gender, religion, ability, or circumstance, has inherent worth.

Respect for Diversity

We honor and support the diverse ways in which various cultures and individuals pursue their own paths to flourishing.

Interdependence

We are all connected, across generations, cultures, and species. Compassion requires recognizing these ties and acting with responsibility for the whole.

Dignity of All Life

Human flourishing is inseparable from the health of our planet. We care for the Earth not just because it enables human flourishing but for its own intrinsic worth.

Humility and Openness

Compassion grows through listening, learning, and respecting diverse voices, especially those historically silenced.

Practical Action

Compassion is not passive. It is an active, courageous, and creative force for change.

Justice and Equity

Compassion in action demands addressing structural inequities and removing conditions that perpetuate suffering.

Systemic Sources of Suffering

Systemic Context

Certain sources of suffering can be traced back thousands of years to the rise of settled communities and agriculture. These include the implicit acceptance of hierarchies, patriarchy, and militarism, each of which has become pervasive.

Overlaying these foundational sources of suffering, a particular worldview emerged in early modern Europe, which has since spread throughout the world as a result of European colonialism and has been reinforced by global systems of power. This worldview is based on a story of separation, seeing nature as a machine and humans as separate from nature. It alleges that humans are essentially selfish and competitive, that the Earth is merely a resource to exploit for human benefit, and that human progress has arisen from the “conquest of nature.”

We draw attention to the fact that the world’s dominant economic system is the tangible manifestation of this worldview, based fundamentally on principles of extraction and exploitation, and is designed as a “wealth pump” to suck wealth from ordinary people and the living Earth to a small elite.

Over the past five hundred years, as this cultural and economic system became dominant, two paradigms have shaped our world in destructive ways:

Human supremacy, which posits that humans have an innate moral right to utilize nonhuman nature entirely for their own purposes; and

White supremacy, a pernicious misconception originating in Europe and spreading through colonialism, which asserts an implicit superiority of white-skinned persons over the majority of the human population (“the Global Majority”).

This has led to intertwining systems, norms, and social structures that perpetuate suffering and undermine compassion, which we identify as follows.

Sources of Suffering

Individual

- **Individualism without responsibility:** A value system that elevates selfishness, greed, and personal gain over collective well-being.
- **Neglect of inner and relational life:** Systems that promote consumerism and material excess from early infancy onward, ignoring the role of mindful awareness, emotional well-being, relationality, and meaning in human thriving.

Community

- **Domination-based social systems.** Social and cultural systems built on callousness and cruelty, which valorize violence and power, perpetuating oppression of those in lower rungs of the socio-cultural hierarchy.
- **“Othering” of out-groups.** Prejudice, bias, and discrimination based on gender, racialized identities, sexual orientation, or other perceived differences, dehumanizing out-groups and establishing power dynamics of “us” against “them.”

Society

- **Economic exploitation and extraction.** The system-wide instantiation of a wealth pump that concentrates wealth and power to a small elite, engendering corruption, gaping inequality, and grinding poverty, leading to widespread hunger and malnutrition in a world of historically unprecedented wealth and material abundance.
- **Growth-based economic system.** A globalized economic order based on the primacy of capital, that prizes growth in GDP above all else, leading to climate breakdown, ecological collapse, and the reckless destruction of life’s abundance.
- **Militarization.** An obsession with international rivalries that has led to over \$2 trillion annually in expenditures, creating existential risk for life on Earth from thermonuclear war.

Leadership

- **Polarization and Dehumanization:** Political, cultural, and digital dynamics that stoke division, fear, and hostility instead of dialogue.
- **Oppressive Governance:** Systems of power, ranging from authoritarianism to flawed democracies, that consistently benefit elites at the expense of ordinary people.

Opportunities to Alleviate Suffering

For each distinct source of suffering, there exists an opportunity to alleviate or eliminate it.

Numerous well-researched, practical, credible, and effective policies and plans already exist.

The GCC calls for a global reorientation toward compassion through the following approaches:

Individual

- **Cultivate Integrated Flourishing.** Encourage practices that foster self-reflection and well-being, a realization of the embodied and interrelational nature of self, and an attitude of kindness to oneself and others.
- **Foster Community Orientation.** Strengthen community bonds and foundations of relationality with social structures that reward collective care and cooperation, and practices and activities that strengthen compassion.

Community

- **Promote Partnership Models of Community.** Encourage systems based on respect, reciprocity, and accountability; valuing prosocial qualities such as compassion, caregiving, and nurturance; welcoming all identities and genders; and cherishing the dignity of all persons in the community.
- **Heal Polarization.** Celebrate differences as part of a richly woven social fabric, recognizing that health arises from a balance of unity with differentiation, while fostering initiatives that bridge divides through collaborative and generative engagement.

Society

- **Embed Compassion in Policy.** Advocate for laws and policies that lead to societal transformation, toward a system that moderates wealth accumulation and prioritizes communal care.
- **Support Sustainable and Regenerative Policies.** Shift economic and political discourse to prioritize ecological and human well-being over profit maximization, supporting movements that recognize humanity's responsibility to care for the living Earth such as Rights of Nature and regenerative agriculture.
- **Expose Structural Violence.** Encourage and support investigation into the underlying causes of structural violence—systems that engender “avoidable insults to basic human needs”—and encourage alternative system design for collective well-being.
- **Embrace Peace and Justice as Universal Values.** Recognizing that peace and justice are interdependent, support movements that advocate for human rights, demilitarization, respect for international law, and exploration of alternative systems for authentic democratic planetary governance.

Leadership

- **Foster Compassionate Leadership.** Motivate leaders in all fields to implement compassion through integrity, listening, and service, and to promote systems that nurture generative dialogue.

- **Advocate for Authentic Democracy.** Support developments in deliberative democracy, citizens' assemblies, participatory budgeting, and other systems of grassroots deep democracy.

Action Initiatives to Alleviate Suffering

Our collective responsibility is to reduce unnecessary suffering in any way we can.

For each of the opportunities to alleviate suffering described above, there are many groups actively working on the ground to turn them into measurable steps toward a more compassionate world.

The GCC invites its members and all caring folk to explore these action initiatives, find the ones that move their heart, and orient themselves toward engaging with, and supporting, their activities.

NOTE: This listing is a work in progress. We welcome your contributions!

Individual

- **Cultivate Integrated Flourishing.** Encourage practices that foster self-reflection and well-being, a realization of the embodied and interrelational nature of self, and an attitude of kindness to oneself and others.
 - **Groups to join or support**
 - [ACLU](#)
 - [Work Four](#)
 - [Common Future](#)
 - **Resources to explore**
 - [Mindsight Institute](#)
 - [American Psychological Association](#)
- **Foster Community Orientation.** Strengthen community bonds and foundations of relationality with social structures that reward collective care and cooperation, and practices and activities that strengthen compassion.
 - **Groups to join or support**
 - [Beloved Community Circles](#)
 - [Shareable](#)
 - [Ecoversities](#)
 - **Resources to explore**
 - [Think Like a Commoner](#) by David Bollier

- [Montessori](#), [Waldorf](#), [Reggio Emilia](#) teaching methods
- [15-minute cities](#)
- [Community Land Trusts](#)

Community

- **Promote Partnership Models of Community.** Encourage systems based on respect, reciprocity, and accountability; valuing prosocial qualities such as compassion, caregiving, and nurturance; welcoming all identities and genders; and cherishing the dignity of all persons in the community.
 - **Groups to join or support**
 - [Center for Partnership Studies](#)
 - [Inner Development Goals](#)
 - [La Via Campesina](#)
 - [Community Conservation Areas Consortium](#)
 - [Cooperation Jackson](#)
 - **Resources to explore**
 - [The Nordic Secret](#) by Lene Andersen (ed. Tomas Bjorkman)
 - [The Presencing Institute](#)
 - [Prosocial Commons](#)

- **Heal Polarization.** Celebrate differences as part of a richly woven social fabric, recognizing that health arises from a balance of unity with differentiation, while fostering initiatives that bridge divides through collaborative and generative engagement.
 - **Groups to join or support**
 - [Othering and Belonging Institute](#)
 - [Braver Angels](#)
 - [The Harwood Institute](#)
 - [Interfaith Movement for Human Integrity](#)
 - **Resources to explore**
 - [Center for Human Technology](#)
 - [RadicalxChange](#)

Society

- **Embed Compassion in Policy.** Advocate for laws and policies that lead to societal transformation, toward a system that moderates wealth accumulation and prioritizes communal care.
 - **Groups to join or support**
 - [Wellbeing Economy Alliance](#)
 - [Earth4All](#)
 - [Sanders Institute](#)
 - [Ecocivilization Coalition](#)
 - **Resources to explore**
 - [Stanford Basic Income Lab](#)
 - [Limitarianism](#) by Ingrid Robeyns
- **Support Sustainable and Regenerative Policies.** Shift economic and political discourse to prioritize ecological and human well-being over profit maximization, supporting movements that recognize humanity’s responsibility to care for the living Earth such as Rights of Nature and regenerative agriculture.
 - **Groups to join or support**
 - [Stop Ecocide International](#)
 - [Nature Needs Half](#)
 - [Extinction Rebellion](#)
 - [350.org](#)
 - [Citizens Climate Lobby](#)
 - **Resources to explore**
 - [Earth Charter](#)
 - [Living Earth Community](#)
 - [One Earth](#)
 - [New York Declaration on Animal Consciousness](#)
- **Expose Structural Violence.** Encourage and support investigation into the underlying causes of structural violence—systems that engender “avoidable insults to basic human needs”—and encourage alternative system design for collective well-being.
 - **Groups to join or support**
 - [Deep Transformation Network](#)
 - [Women's Earth and Climate Action Network](#)
 - [Global Tapestry of Alternatives](#)

- [Culture Hack Labs](#)
 - [Ecocivilization Coalition](#)
 - **Resources to explore**
 - [The Divide by Jason Hickel](#)
 - [Wealth Supremacy](#) by Marjorie Kelly
 - [Elite Capture](#) by Olúfẹ́mi O. Táíwò
- **Embrace Peace and Justice as Universal Values.** Recognizing that peace and justice are interdependent, support movements that advocate for human rights, demilitarization, respect for international law, and exploration of alternative systems for authentic democratic planetary governance.
 - **Groups to join or support**
 - [Standing Together](#)
 - [World Beyond War](#)
 - [Democracy Without Borders](#)
 - **Resources to explore**
 - [Children of a Modest Star](#) by Jonathan Blake and Nils Gilman
 - [Bioregionalism](#)

Leadership

- **Foster Compassionate Leadership.** Motivate leaders in all fields to implement compassion through integrity, listening, and service, and to promote systems that nurture generative dialogue.
 - **Groups to join or support**
 - [The Presencing Institute](#)
 - [Center for Compassionate Leadership](#)
 - **Resources to explore**
 - [Catalyzing Transformation](#) by Sandra Waddock
- **Advocate for Authentic Democracy.** Support developments in deliberative democracy, citizens' assemblies, participatory budgeting, and other systems of grassroots deep democracy.
 - **Groups to join or support**
 - [Democracy Next](#)

- [Participedia](#)
- [People Powered](#)
- **Resources to explore**
 - [Deliberative Democracy Lab](#) - Stanford