



**Be Peace. Choose Peace. Create Peace.**

## PEACEFUL READERS INFORMATION SHEET

Version 12032021

<b>Book Title</b>	<b>Twelve Steps to a Compassionate Life</b>
<b>Book Author</b>	Karen Armstrong
<b>Book Publication Date</b>	December 28, 2010
<b>Book Publisher</b>	Knopf
<b>Print Length</b>	240 pages

### Book Club Event Information

**Event Dates** Mon. December 6, 2021, 6:30 pm EST  
Mon., January 10, 2022, 6:30 pm EST

**Event Registration Link** [Here](#)

**Event Webpage** [Here](https://peacethroughaction.org/do-something-for-peace/choose-peaceful-actions/additional-learning-resources/peaceful-readers-book-club/compassionatelife/) (https://peacethroughaction.org/do-something-for-peace/choose-peaceful-actions/additional-learning-resources/peaceful-readers-book-club/compassionatelife/)

### Where to Borrow or Buy Your Copy

#### Borrow

- Check your public library, or a college library if you have access. If they do not have copies in circulation, they *may* be able to acquire a copy through interlibrary loan.

#### Buy

- Visit or contact an independent bookseller in your area and check whether they have the book in stock or can procure a copy for you.
- Amazon and Barnes & Noble are two larger booksellers with online and in-store purchasing options.

### Book Description

“One of the most original thinkers on the role of religion in the modern world—author of such acclaimed books as *A History of God*, *Islam*, and *Buddha*—now gives us an impassioned and practical book that can help us make the world a more compassionate place.

Karen Armstrong believes that while compassion is intrinsic in all human beings, each of us needs to work diligently to cultivate and expand our capacity for compassion. Here, in this straightforward, thoughtful, and thought-provoking book, she sets out a program that can lead us toward a more compassionate life.

The twelve steps Armstrong suggests beginning with “Learn About Compassion” and close with “Love Your Enemies.” In between, she takes up “compassion for yourself,” mindfulness, suffering, sympathetic joy, the limits of our knowledge of others, and “concern for everybody.” She suggests concrete ways of enhancing our compassion and putting it into action in our everyday lives, and provides, as well, a reading list to encourage us to “hear one another’s narratives.” Throughout, Armstrong makes clear that a compassionate life is not a matter of only heart or mind but a deliberate and often life-altering commingling of the two.”

Book reviews available, including from [The Guardian](#) and [goodreads](#)

## Reflection Questions

- What is my biggest takeaway from “Twelve Steps to a Compassionate Life” by Karen Armstrong?
- Which step do I find easiest to apply in my life?
- Which step do I find the most challenging?
- In what areas of my life do I need to be more compassionate?
- In what ways can I develop more self-compassion to build a stronger foundation of loving kindness that I can then share with the world?
- What is my biggest vision for my life in regard to living with compassion?
- How will I feel when I am living a compassionate life?

## Learning Resources

- [Charter for Compassion website](#)
- [Charter for Compassion animation](#) (4 min.)
- [Charter for Compassion launch](#), Berkley Center for Religion, Peace & World Affairs at Georgetown University (60 min.)
- [Karen Armstrong Biography on Britannica](#)
- [Karen Armstrong on Twitter](#)
- [Karen Armstrong on Facebook](#)
- [Video - Karen Armstrong on Oprah's SuperSoul Sunday](#) (2 min.)
- [Video - Karen Armstrong TED Talk](#) (22 min.)
- [Video - Compassion in Action](#), Karen Armstrong at the Dalai Lama Center for Peace and Education (22 min)
- [Video - How Little We Know](#), Empathy and Compassion in Society 2013 (17 min.)
- [Video - Compassion Talk](#), 2016 Festival of Faiths, “Sacred Wisdom, Pathways to Nonviolence” (32 min.)

## Take Action

### Recommendations by Charter for Compassion

- Visit [Charter for Compassion](#)
- Sign the Charter for Compassion and invite your friends to do the same.
- Examine the teachings of your own religious or secular tradition about compassion.
- For the next month, keep a journal of notes, passages, poems, thoughts on what you learn about compassion (see book page 27).
- Look at what’s happening in your family, school, workplace, religious community, penal institutions, etc. What teachings, practices, or policies contribute to a lack of compassion? Identify ways you might help bring them to light and/or change them—whether it’s writing a letter to the editor of the local paper, creating a curriculum on compassion, starting a mediation program in the schools, or whatever action resonates with you.
- Make a list of your positive qualities, good deeds, talents, and achievements.
- Our own suffering often increases our compassion for others. Acknowledge the difficulties and suffering you’ve endured and how you used or might use your experience to help others. For instance, if you’ve experienced a serious illness or took care of someone who did, consider volunteering to help others navigate a similar circumstance.
- Practice the Buddha’s meditation on the four immeasurable minds of love (see book page 85).
- Spend a day —tuning into how people around you are feeling.

- It is often difficult to witness suffering and to engage with someone in distress, especially when we are preoccupied with our own concerns. Notice, over the next month, when you want to turn away. Instead, remember how it feels to be hurt, depressed, angry, helpless, and distraught. Then remember what it was like to have someone be kind and caring toward you. Offer that person a kind gesture (see book pages 101–102).
- If you are not familiar with mindfulness meditation, check out one or more books listed in Twelve Steps to a Compassionate Life Suggestions for Further Reading (see page 215).
- Set a time each day to try one or more of these meditations.
- Make a resolution to act once every day in accordance with the positive version of the Golden Rule: “Treat others as you would wish to be treated yourself”
- Follow the three steps Armstrong lays out on pages 128–130.
- Read through Armstrong’s questions on pages 141–142 to help you analyze and be more mindful of the way you approach discussions and arguments.
- Follow Armstrong’s suggestions on pages 148–149 for expanding your mindfulness practice to encompass the way you think and speak about people from other countries, cultures, ethnic groups, or religions.
- Follow the directions on page 186 to —investigate your enemy. Notice how you feel before and after the exercise. Do you view your —enemy any differently? What has changed?
- Share a personal story of compassion at [charterforcompassion.org](http://charterforcompassion.org).

## Help Promote the Peaceful Readers Book Club

### Suggested “Formal” Message for Facebook and Instagram

@calvertpeaceproject just finished reading and discussing Karen Armstrong’s “Twelve Steps to a Compassionate Life.” We discussed the importance of empathy, mindfulness, and having compassion for ourselves and others. I highly recommend joining us for the next book “The Power of Now” by Eckhart Tolle. We will begin in February! <https://peacethroughaction.org/bookclub>.

### Suggested “Formal” Message for Twitter

@calvertpeace book club meets in February! We will read “The Power of Now” by Eckhart Tolle. #CalvertPeaceProject #PeaceBeginsInCalvert #PeacefulReaders Join us: <https://peacethroughaction.org/bookclub>

### Suggested “Personal” Social Media Messages

I just heard about this Peaceful Readers Book Club by @CalvertPeaceProject and I’m going to take part. Wanna join me? Learn more and sign up at <https://peacethroughaction.org/bookclub>. Let me know if you join it. #CalvertPeaceProject #PeaceBeginsInCalvert #PeaceThroughAction #PeaceBeginsWithWe #PeacefulReaders

I know some of my people like to read books about social issues. Just found out about the Peaceful Readers Book Club by @CalvertPeaceProject. I’m going to join it. Check it out at <https://peacethroughaction.org/bookclub>. #CalvertPeaceProject #PeaceBeginsInCalvert #PeaceThroughAction #PeaceBeginsWithWe #PeacefulReaders.

Some of us have been talking about reading social justice books together. I found a Peaceful Readers Book Club by @CalvertPeaceProject. How cool is that! Check out <https://peacethroughaction.org/bookclub> and then let’s talk. #CalvertPeaceProject #PeaceBeginsInCalvert #PeaceThroughAction #PeaceBeginsWithWe #PeacefulReaders