



Compassion: an Objective Form of Empathy, by Jeff Weiner

As the Dalai Lama explains, if you are walking along a trail and come along a person who is being crushed by a boulder, an empathetic reaction would result in you feeling the same sense of crushing suffocation and render you unable to help. The compassionate reaction would put you in the sufferer's shoes, thinking this person must be experiencing horrible pain so you're going to do everything in your power to remove the boulder and alleviate their suffering. Put another way, compassion is a more objective form of empathy. This idea of seeing things clearly through another person's perspective can be invaluable when it comes to relating with others, particularly in tense work situations.

For example, when strongly disagreeing with another, most of us have a tendency to see things solely through our own world view. In those situations, some will immediately assume that the other person is ignorant and/or has nefarious intentions. Your mind immediately turns to the thought, "How could they possibly not agree with me?"

In these circumstances, it can be constructive to take a minute to understand why the other person has reached the conclusion that they have. For instance, what in their background has led them to take that position? Do they have the appropriate experience to be making optimal decisions? Are they fearful of a particular outcome that may not be obvious at surface level? Asking yourself these questions, and more importantly, asking the other person these questions, can take what would otherwise be a challenging situation and transform it into a coachable moment and truly collaborative experience.