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Press Release

Compassion Makes People Happy

A new study by psychologists at the University of Mannheim shows: people who treat others with compassion also benefit themselves—psychologically, socially, and emotionally. The findings of this meta-study are based on an analysis of more than 40 studies and have now been published in *Scientific Reports*.

People who treat others with compassion often feel more at ease themselves. This is the key finding of a new study by Majlinda Zhuniq, Dr. Friedericke Winter, and Professor Corina Aguilar-Raab from the University of Mannheim. The study was recently published in the journal *Scientific Reports*.

While the link between self-compassion and well-being is well established, this effect has hardly been researched with respect to compassion for others. In a meta-analysis, the research team analyzed data from more than 40 individual studies. The results showed that people who empathize with others, support them, or want to help them report greater overall life satisfaction, experience more joy, and see more meaning in life. On average, these people's psychological well-being was higher. The link between compassion and a reduction in negative feelings, such as stress or sadness, was weaker, however, slight positive trends could also be seen in this respect.

Scientifically speaking, compassion is described as the ability to recognize the suffering of others, react to it emotionally, and be motivated to alleviate this suffering. This means, for example, offering someone in a distressing situation practical help or providing a little relief in everyday life.

What is particularly interesting is that the link between compassion and personal well-being occurred regardless of the age, gender, or religion of the people studied. This suggests that it is a fundamental link that has a similar effect in different population groups. However, the researchers also point out that well-controlled long-term studies are still needed to understand the exact mechanisms of action.

"Since one's own well-being contributes to longevity, health, and social functioning, promoting compassion for others appears to be a promising approach for psychological and public health interventions," first author Majlinda Zhuniq summarizes. If we succeed in specifically promoting compassion through education, social projects, or other programs,

this could therefore not only increase the quality of life of individuals but also improve social interactions. According to the authors, possible options could be school programs, adult education offers, or digital training courses that contribute to people being more compassionate in their everyday lives.

In a smaller group of studies, the team also researched how targeted compassion training—such as certain forms of meditation—affect well-being. The findings of these studies also show an improvement, which indicates that compassion can actively promote one's own well-being—and is not just a side effect of it.

Online training

The very same research team at the University of Mannheim is currently offering a scientifically accompanied, paid compassion training course. For more information and the link to the registration form, please see: <https://sosci.sowi.uni-mannheim.de/Pathways-to-Compassion/> (in German only).

Notes on publication:

Zhuniq, M., Winter, F. & Aguilar-Raab, C. Compassion for others and well-being: a meta-analysis. *Sci Rep* 15, 36478 (2025). <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-025-23460-7>

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