

**Appendix A:
Small Deed Big ImpACT of Compassion
Full Project Description**

The purpose of Small Deed Big ImpACT of Compassion assignment is to apply your learning by designing and carrying out a small but extraordinary act of compassion for someone who is suffering. Below are the steps you will take to complete the project.

1. **Step 1: Identify Someone (or a Group) Who is Suffering.** The person could be someone who has experienced COVID-related suffering (e.g., someone experiencing long COVID-19, the loved one of someone who has died, someone who lost their job, a single parent who homeschooled children while working, a business owner who has struggled to stay open, an immunocompromised person experiencing isolation). You can also choose a person or a group who is experiencing other types of human-related suffering (e.g., illness or disease, medical treatment, loss of a loved one, food insecurity, addiction, divorce, deportation, war). I encourage you to identify someone or a group you don't know very well or not at all. If you choose someone you do know, challenge yourself to go beyond best friends and close family members. Whereas we all experience challenges, please identify someone whose suffering is likely significant and long term. If you do not know anyone like this, ask others. Great suffering is not uncommon. If you are passionate about working with a certain organization, I encourage you to reach out to them to see if there is someone or a group of people who might be in need of a small deed of compassion. The process of being a volunteer often takes a good deal of time. If you choose this option, you will want get going immediately so you do not get behind on the assignment.
2. **Step 2: Research the Experience of the Person/Group who is Suffering**
Identify at least five *research-based* sources (e.g., academic articles or book chapters, websites, news articles, blogs, podcasts, documentaries) that will inform your project and provide a detailed account of multiple people who experience the type of suffering you are studying. Keep in mind that certain kinds of experiences will lead to similar challenges, but all people will not suffer in exactly the same ways. You want to get multiple perspectives.
3. **Step 3: Interview the Person or Someone Familiar with the Challenge**
Interview the person for whom you plan to do the compassionate act, someone who has gone through the experience before, someone who has expertise in the challenge, or someone else who has insight about what it feels like to go through what your identified person or group is experiencing. Your goal is to understand as fully as you can what the person is going through so that you can begin to empathize and design an act of compassion that will meaningfully address their suffering. See the interview guide on Canvas > Files > Project Documents.

4. **Step 4: Small Deed Big ImpAct of Compassion Proposal Mind Map Presentation (20 points)** Due April 28th

The purpose of the proposal mind map and presentation is to allow you to think deeply about your act of compassion, get feedback from your Circle of Support peers, and to refine your proposal before turning it in on Tuesday, May 3rd. Peers will also get practice in critically thinking about empathy, compassion, and reflexivity as they help you think through your ideas.

Your task is to create a visual mind map that outlines your proposal. We will cover examples of mind maps in class. The idea behind outlining your proposal visually is to help you think through all that must be taken into consideration about the compassionate act before carrying it out. Your mind map should include the following six main “bubbles” and at least three “sub-bubbles” of each based on the proposal assignment. See the description of each in #5/Step 5 below.

- Overview
- Impact
- Person/Group
- Dual-Perspective Empathy (Self, Other, Dual)
- Proposed Act of Compassion Plan
- Reflexivity

You are welcome to choose the layout of your bubbles. You might think about:

- How are they related and overlapping visually?
- How will you use color to demonstrate their relationship?
- What additional bubbles will you need to be able to think through your ideas?
- What are the missing bubbles that you need to add and fill in before you feel confident in your act of compassion?

In order to present your mind map, please have your mind map prepared in a format that can be easily shared (e.g., printed or drawn out, emailed to me ahead of class so that I can share it for you on the projector).

Mind Map Presentation Grading Criteria

- Your mind map includes the six main “bubbles” with three “sub-bubbles” off of each main bubble
- Effort (e.g., it is clear that you put time and energy into your mind map, you are prepared to share your mind map with the class)
- Presentation (e.g., your mind map is in a shareable format for Zoom, you clearly describe your mind map)

5. **Step 5: Small Deed Big ImpAct of Compassion Proposal Paper (100 points)** Due May 3rd

Write a 6-8 paged paper (double-spaced, Times New Roman font, one-inch margins) that includes the following sections. Please use the below headings in your paper.

- a. **Overview:** Based on your research and interview, provide a description of the general experience of the type suffering your person is going through. For example, what are the definitions, statistics, causes, treatments? If you are working with a particular organization, describe the organization and what they do in order to address this type of suffering. Cite your sources and your interviewee in APA format to back your claims. (1/2 - 1 page)
- b. **Impact:** Based on your research and interview, what is the impact of the suffering on people? What does the experience of suffering feel like? For example, what are the challenges of people who are facing this type of suffering? What emotions do they experience? What is the impact on their work, relationships, and well-being? Cite your sources and your interviewee in APA format to back your claims. (1/2 - 1 page)
- c. **Person/Group:** Who is the person/group you will direct your act of compassion toward? (You need to have identified the person/group who will receive your act of compassion by the time you write the proposal.) How is their situation similar or different from what you describe in the two sections above? What do you know or not know about the person/group for whom you will do the compassionate act? What do you need to find out before you carry out the act? (1/2 - 1 page)
- d. **Dual-Perspective Empathizing:** Based on our readings and discussion of dual-perspective empathy (Oxley), discuss what it is like for your person/group to be going through the challenges facing them. What (do you think) it is like for them? How does it feel (some of this you will have addressed in the sections above; further elaborate here)? What is it/would it be like if you were in the situation? What do/would you feel and why? (1/2 - 1 page)
- e. **Proposed Act of Compassion Plan**
 - i. Based on your research and interview, **what will your small act of compassion be?** This should be something that directly allows you to communicate empathy and to show that you understand and feel to some extent what the person/group is going through. This might be something you give to the person/group, something you make, something you do for them, or something you do with them. As a starting point, some ideas for acts of compassion include: organizing an online fundraiser, making artwork or a craft (e.g., scrapbook, painting, blanket) that showcases your empathy, making a video of photos that captures how much the person is celebrated, running errands for someone who cannot get out because they are immunocompromised, finding a safe and innovative way to connect with someone who is suffering due to isolation, doing yard cleanup or household chores for someone, or working with an organization that is in need of volunteers at this time. You should not spend a lot of money personally. However, it is okay to procure donations if you would like, but you need to reflect on the implications of doing so. (We will discuss ideas and implications in class.)

- ii. In what ways does your proposed act of compassion meet or not meet **Underwood’s definition of compassionate love and the five qualities she outlines?**
- iii. What is your **plan logistically** (e.g., timeline, how will your act be delivered?, whose support do you need to carry out your plan?, will your act be anonymous) (i.-iii. 1-2 pages)
- f. **Reflexivity:** Based on your readings about anti-racism and the downsides of empathy, what do you need to consider when carrying out your project? What do you need to consider so that your act of compassion is mindful of inclusivity, does not further alienate, belittle, subjugate, harm, etc. the person/group you identified? What privileges do you have that may impact your ability to act truly compassionate? How will you remain reflexive, mindful, and self-compassionate as you carry out your act of compassion? How does your act of compassion reflect this reflexivity? Site at least two sources from class in your response (1/2-1 page page)
- g. **References:** Please cite your sources in APA format (does not count toward page limit)
- h. **Interview Protocol:** Include your interview questions at the end of the proposal document (does not count toward page limit)

Proposal Evaluation Criteria

- You address each section thoroughly, thoughtfully, and critically. You demonstrate a strong and accurate understanding of the course content.
- You use citations to support your claims when they are not your own. You use at least five academic sources. You use APA formatting correctly in text and in the reference page.
- Your writing is free of grammatical and typographical errors. You follow the formatting guidelines of the paper.
- You provide evidence that you put a great deal of time and thought into your proposal.

6. **Step 6: Carry Out Your Small Deed Big ImpAct of Compassion (once approved by Erin)**

7. **Present Your Small Deed Big ImpAct of Compassion to the Class on May 31** For the Small Deed Big ImpACT of Compassion Presentation, you will have 3 minutes to present the following:

- Brief explanation of what you did for your project
- Share your project “evidence” or something that shows that you carried out the project you set forth. This could be a picture, a link, an email or text exchange from the person, for example. Please email me this evidence via Canvas by 8:00 a.m. on May 31st so that I can share it for you during your presentation.
- What was your person, group, audience’s response to your compassionate act?

- What is one of the most meaningful lessons you learned about empathy and compassion through this project? “Meaningful” can refer to something that changed, moved, surprised, inspired, or quieted you, for example.

Grading criteria include:

- You address all four parts of the presentation (5 points)
- You demonstrate that you have prepared for your presentation (e.g., you know what you are going to say, you have your “evidence” turned into me before the presentation, your presentation fits the time limit) (10 points)
- Your most meaningful lesson demonstrates your thought, care, and engagement with your learning (10 points)

If you are not able to be in class in person the May 31st due to illness or other difficult circumstances, please let me know ahead of time as you are able, and I can set up a Zoom link for you. If you are not able to attend in person or online, you will need to record your presentation via Zoom and send me the link to the recording.

8. Small Deed Big ImpAct of Compassion Project Reflection (part of Final Reflection Paper due June 7) In your final reflection paper, please detail the following in your answer:

- Brief reminder of the person/group and their challenge/suffering
- What you did for your act of compassion
- How did your small deed demonstrate empathy based on the definition you provided in number 1?
- How did your small deed demonstrate compassion based on the definition you provided in number 1?
- How did this project impact your understanding of empathy and compassion?
- How has the project impacted the way you will communicate and extend compassion to others in the future?
- What did you do for your project to meet the capstone objective of: “Present in-depth academic engagement with a communication issue to a public audience?”
- Please include an attachment along with your paper that provides evidence that you carried out the act of compassion. This could be picture, an email exchange, the thing itself, for example. The attachment will not count toward the page limit. (1-2 pages)