

Original article

How can we feel the compassion effect like the Mother Teresa effect?

Kyung Ja Ko^{1*}, Hyun-Yong Cho²

^{1*}Department of Korean Medicine, College of Korean Medicine, Kyung Hee University, Seoul, Republic of Korea. Youtube K-culture pangpangtongtong tv (https://youtu.be/SSenbSwI_5c)

²Korean Language Education, Kyung Hee University, Seoul, Republic of Korea.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to suggest that compassion is used as a mechanism to improve immunity by activating people's parasympathetic nerves. Compassion is pity and heartbreak for the misfortune of others. The instinctive emotion of compassion is the basis for humans to achieve and develop society. This is also linked to the laws of nature and the factors of evolution that Kropotkin, famous for his "mutual assistance (mutualism)" that all things help each other. Compassion is an individual's instinctive emotion and at the same time a driving force for forming and developing society. If the Hopeful World (希望世上) performs Korean traditional music healing at a nursing home, first, it will have a positive healing effect on the elderly in the nursing home, who are the audience. Second, positive healing effects can also be expected from performers. The stronger the compassion, the greater the healing effect. Third, people who watch the performance also enjoy the healing effect. This seems to have brought about a synergistic effect by combining the feelings felt while looking at the excellent behavior felt by seeing the poor person. It seems that this effect can be named the compassion effect that developed the Mother Teresa effect. The Mother Teresa effect refers to a significant improvement in the body's immune function just by volunteering or seeing good things. By expanding this Mother Teresa effect, it can be inferred that a pitying heart, helping behavior, and being with good behavior will all help improve the human immune system. This can also be called the compassion effect. Therefore, we think having compassion activates the parasympathetic nerves, improving your mood, and increasing your immunity.

Keywords compassion (惻隱之心 仁之端也), Korean traditional music healing performance, The Hopeful World (希望世上).

INTRODUCTION

The Works of Mencius (孟子), an oriental philosophical book, is based on the theory of good human

nature. In this book, Mencius (孟子 BC 372-BC 289) presents four minds that all humans have. Among them, the fundamental idea of Confucianism is mercy (仁). Mercy is compassion (惻隱之心 仁之端也). Compassion is pity and heartbreak for the misfortune of others. Compassion comes from the Latin word 'compati' and means "pain",¹ this has been defined as a deep awareness of other people's pain and a desire to relieve it.²

*Correspondence: Kyung Ja Ko

E-mail: laondo@daum.net

Received Aug 12, 2023; Accepted Aug 28, 2023; Published Aug 31, 2023

doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5667/CellMed.2023.012>

©2023 by CellMed Orthocellular Medicine Pharmaceutical Association

This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC license.

(<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/3.0/>)

Compassion is an emotional response to other people's pain, accompanied by a desire to provide real help.^{3,4} The value of compassion has a long history not only as an antidote to pain and antisocial behavior but also as a material for philosophical and spiritual writing.⁵⁻⁷ Compassion is based on sympathetic resonance and understanding by adding action.^{4,8-11} Compassion involves not only sensitivity to pain but also secondary mentalization of how to alleviate pain.¹² Some refer to compassion as empathy in action or "sympathy for pain".⁹ There are reports that empathy is good for people, but compassion is the most preferred and influential.¹³ Evolutionarily, it helps us survive by promoting connections with larger groups, and because it includes neural structures that are considered part of the brain's reward system, we are probably connected to feeling compassion.^{4,14} The instinctive emotion of compassion is the basis for humans to achieve and develop society. This is also linked to the laws of nature and the factors of evolution that Kropotkin, famous for his "mutual assistance (mutualism)" that all things help each other. Compassion is an individual's instinctive emotion and at the same time a driving force for forming and developing society. Compassion purifies human emotions and appears to be associated with the secretion of oxytocin, called a happy substance. In other words, it is an instinctive emotional state that an individual saw and felt, but the desire to pity and help others made the individual happy. This would have had a positive effect on human evolution. However, the phenomenon called the Mother Teresa effect and the Mencius compassion can be considered as a linked concept.

What is the Hopeful World (希望世上)?

The Hopeful World (希望世上) started in 1988 as a group studying Korean traditional culture. Since then, we have made effort to educate and perform Korean

traditional culture, and have been conducting charity performance for a long time to this day. The continuous charity performance for the elderly was a time of compassion and healing with good influence and joy not only for us who were performing but also for those who watched it together.

There is no specific evidence, but those who participated testified consistently. Currently, two authors of the paper are also always participating in the charity performance.

What is the Mother Teresa effect?

We think the Mother Teresa effect is a reminder that there is an altruistic psychology in people's minds. These good thoughts activate parasympathetic nerves, increase saliva, and increase immunity. Unfortunately, we haven't found any concrete evidence, but I'm fully aware of it as a philanthropist in the field.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Over the past 30 years or so, studies of compassion have been found to have major physiological and psychological effects that affect well-being, address mental health problems, and promote social-friendly behavior. However, we have only studied the neurophysiological, psychological, and social dimensions of compassion for about 30 years.^{11,15-20} In the general community, compassion intervention has been shown to improve compassion for oneself and others.^{12,20,22} Therefore, fostering compassion can help improve overall happiness as well as self-efficacy.²³⁻²⁶

If the Hopeful World (希望世上) performs Korean traditional music healing at a nursing home, first, it will have a positive healing effect on the elderly in the nursing home, who are the audience. Second, positive healing effects can also be expected from performers. The

stronger the compassion, the greater the healing effect. Third, people who watch the performance also enjoy the healing effect. This seems to have brought about a synergistic effect by combining the feelings felt while looking at the good behavior felt by seeing the poor person.

It seems that this effect can be named as the compassion effect that developed the Mother Teresa effect. The Mother Teresa effect refers to a significant improvement in the body's immune function just by volunteering or seeing good things. By expanding this Mother Teresa effect, it can be inferred that a pitying heart, helping behavior, and being with good behavior will all help improve the human immune system. This can also be called the compassion effect.

Therefore, the lack of concrete evidence suggests that we believe that compassion activates parasympathetic nerves, improves mood, and increases immunity.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Not applicable

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflicting financial interests.

REFERENCES

- 1 Hoad, T. F. J. The concise Oxford dictionary of English etymology. (1993).
- 2 Morris, W. J. The American heritage dictionary of the English language. (1969).
- 3 Singer, T. & Klimecki, O. M. J. C. B. Empathy and compassion. **24**, R875-R878 (2014).
- 4 Goetz, J. L., Keltner, D. & Simon-Thomas, E. J. P. b. Compassion: an evolutionary analysis and empirical review. **136**, 351 (2010).
- 5 Lama, D. J. S. F. T. The Power of Compassion: A

Collection of Lectures by His Holiness the Dalai Lama. (1981).

- 6 Lampert, K. *Traditions of compassion: From religious duty to social activism.* (Springer, 2005).
- 7 Ricard, M. *Altruism: The power of compassion to change yourself and the world.* (Little, Brown, 2015).
- 8 Keltner, D., Marsh, J. & Smith, J. A. *The compassionate instinct: The science of human goodness.* (WW Norton & Company, 2010).
- 9 Germer, C. K. & Siegel, R. D. *Wisdom and compassion in psychotherapy: Deepening mindfulness in clinical practice.* (Guilford Press, 2012).
- 10 Soto-Rubio, A., Sinclair, S. J. J. o. p. & management, s. In defense of sympathy, in consideration of empathy, and in praise of compassion: A history of the present. **55**, 1428-1434 (2018).
- 11 Stevens, L. C. & Woodruff, C. C. *The neuroscience of empathy, compassion, and self-compassion.* (Academic Press, 2018).
- 12 Irons, C., Heriot-Maitland, C. J. P., psychotherapy: Theory, r. & practice. Compassionate mind training: An 8-week group for the general public. **94**, 443-463 (2021).
- 13 Sinclair, S. *et al.* Sympathy, empathy, and compassion: A grounded theory study of palliative care patients' understandings, experiences, and preferences. **31**, 437-447 (2017).
- 14 Kim, J.-W. *et al.* Compassionate attitude towards others' suffering activates the mesolimbic neural system. **47**, 2073-2081 (2009).
- 15 Weng, H. Y. *et al.* Compassion training alters altruism and neural responses to suffering. **24**, 1171-1180 (2013).

- 16 Gilbert, P. *Compassion: Concepts, research and applications*. (Taylor & Francis, 2017).
- 17 Seppälä, E. M. *et al. The Oxford handbook of compassion science*. (Oxford University Press, 2017).
- 18 Petrocchi, N., Cheli, S. J. P., Psychotherapy: Theory, R. & Practice. The social brain and heart rate variability: Implications for psychotherapy. **92**, 208-223 (2019).
- 19 Singer, T. & Engert, V. J. C. O. i. P. It matters what you practice: Differential training effects on subjective experience, behavior, brain and body in the ReSource Project. **28**, 151-158 (2019).
- 20 Kim, J. J., Kent, K. M., Cunningham, R., Gilbert, P. & Kirby, J. N. J. S. R. Attachment styles modulate neural markers of threat and imagery when engaging in self-criticism. **10**, 13776 (2020).
- 21 Matos, M. *et al. Psychological and physiological effects of compassionate mind training: A pilot randomised controlled study*. **8**, 1699-1712 (2017).
- 22 Sommers-Spijkerman, M. *et al. Exploring compassionate attributes and skills among individuals participating in compassion-focused therapy for enhancing well-being*. **93**, 555-571 (2020).
- 23 Bohecker, L., Vereen, L. G., Wells, P. C., Wathen, C. C. J. C. E. & Supervision. A mindfulness experiential small group to help students tolerate ambiguity. **55**, 16-30 (2016).
- 24 Butts, C. M., Gutierrez, D. J. C. E. & Supervision. Dispositional mindfulness and personal distress as predictors of counseling self-efficacy. **57**, 271-284 (2018).
- 25 Wicks, R. J. & Maynard, E. A. *Clinician's guide to self-renewal: Essential advice from the field*. (John Wiley & Sons, 2014).
- 26 Laverdière, O., Ogrodniczuk, J. S., Kealy, D. J. T. J. o. n. & disease, m. Clinicians' empathy and professional quality of life. **207**, 49-52 (2019).