

The Compassionate Ottawa Story Discussion Guide



Nurturing A Community Model Of Caring

*Our vision for Ottawa:
“A compassionate Ottawa
supports and empowers
individuals, their families
and their communities
throughout life to live well
and to die and grieve well”*



Compassionate Ottawa
Compassion Ottawa

You can create your own compassionate community!

Why not bring together a group to discuss the possibilities?

Why did Compassionate Ottawa create our Video and this Discussion Guide?

The sub-title of the Compassionate Ottawa Story video is **Nuturing A Community Model Of Caring**. Dr. Allan Kellehear, author of the Compassionate City Charter, states that a compassionate community is one where “*its residents recognize that care for one another in times of crisis and loss is not simply a task solely for health and social services, but is everyone’s responsibility*”.

Compassionate Ottawa is committed to playing a leadership role in helping to nurture a community model of caring, working in collaboration with health providers. This model is built on the principles of community development wherein it is the community that determines its needs and develops its path to help deal with its needs. The role of Compassionate Ottawa is to help facilitate this process.

Ottawa is one large community but its vibrancy consists of its many smaller communities. These include both geographic and a wide variety of communities of interest. The residents of Ottawa have a key role to play in nurturing a community of caring in their own communities. Likewise, you can create your own compassionate community in one or more communities in which you are engaged.

Compassionate Ottawa started in late 2016 as a broad-based community undertaking. It aims to reach all the citizens of Ottawa, well over a million people! But this is only one approach to developing a compassionate community.

In many other communities, compassionate community initiatives have been developed as part of a residential hospice or a volunteer visiting hospice program. There are also examples of

individuals creating their own compassionate community in their condominium, local neighborhood or community of interest, for example, their ethno-cultural community. While some compassionate community initiatives have focused on specific areas such as schools and workplaces, others have focused on topics like advance care planning, grief and bereavement or caregiving. Volunteers play a key role in developing all of these initiatives.

Compassionate communities can be best understood as a vision composed of ideas and values about how people could better support one other with aging, caregiving, dying and grieving. These ideas can be interpreted and values applied in different ways to suit people and their situation. It is not a one-size fits all.

You are Interested. Now What?

A good place to start is to bring a few like-minded people together to discuss their interest in becoming a compassionate community.

If the individuals gathering are not at all familiar with the meaning of a compassionate community, a good first step for them might be to watch a recorded conversation between Allan Kellehear and Mary Lou Kelley. The Conversation is called *End of Life Care is Everyone’s Responsibility*. This conversation can be watched at home on a computer or tablet before attending the gathering. The conversation is about 45 minutes in length, and can be found on the Compassionate Ottawa website in the Resource section under Conversations with Leaders” (www.compassioanteottawa.ca/resources).





End of Life Care is Everyone’s Responsibility (October, 2020)

When people gather together, they can watch the video *The Compassionate Ottawa Story: Nurturing a Community Model of Caring*. It is only 8 minutes in length! The video can be found at (www.compassioanteottawa.ca/resources).



If a group is gathering in one location for the viewing, they can stream the video via a computer or tablet onto a large screen television. You can also use a projector to project it onto a screen for everyone to see. If participants are gathering virtually, for example on Zoom, one person can share the video from their computer with everyone invited to the meeting. There are many ways to see and share the video.

Viewing the video could be followed by a discussion using the following questions:

- Do you think there would be interest in creating a compassionate community within our neighborhood/interest group?
- How might we use the video in exploring possible interest further?
- What additional information would we need to launch a compassionate community discussion?

[There are also some supplementary questions in the Appendix you can consider for further discussion.]

Next Steps?

After viewing the Compassionate Ottawa Story video, the next step is reviewing the Compassionate Ottawa Story Handbook. Individuals participating in the pilot studies found the video inspiring, but next wanted practical information about how to implement the vision of a compassionate community. *Where do we begin* they asked? Compassionate Ottawa’s Handbook provides a concrete example to learn from and answers that question.

The Compassionate Ottawa Handbook provides very practical information on Compassionate Ottawa’s formation, activities and experience. It provides the “nitty gritty” details of how their initiative evolved. The sections of the Handbook are: *Lessons Learned*,

Overview of Compassionate Ottawa (structure and program), and *Milestones, Activities and Guidance for Others*.

While you may ultimately choose to do things differently in your community, discussing the experience of Compassionate Ottawa provides a concrete example and will get you thinking about the practicalities. That will get you going!

You can review and download the Handbook which is on the Compassionate Ottawa website www.compassionateottawa.ca/resources.

The table of contents of the Handbook is shown below.

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Digging Deeper!

You will note in the Handbook that the early leaders of Compassionate Ottawa spent a lot of time reading and reviewing international reports and other resources related to compassionate communities. This was a very valuable grounding.

There are three Appendices in the Handbook that contain helpful resources.

Appendix A – This describes the *Developing a Compassionate Community Model* created by Mary Lou Kelley (2021). It is a Canadian example of a public health approach to care in the community where aging, dying, grieving and caregiving is everyone's responsibility. Because it is based on concepts, it is applicable to diverse communities.

Appendix B - This contains the Compassionate Community Charter developed by Allan Kellehear. This document was the foundation for the compassionate community movement internationally. It also provided a framework for the early years of Compassionate Ottawa's development.

Appendix C - This provides a list of international reports and websites that provide further background and examples of compassionate community work. A good place to start would be the BC Centre for Palliative Care which has excellent materials for community organizations.

*From here it is up to you
and your community.*

*Your initiative will take on
a life of its own and will
develop its own unique
approach to creating a
compassionate community.*

Appendix: Supplementary Questions

As your group continues thinking and talking about developing a compassionate community, here are some additional questions to consider:

Questions about the video:

- “How can we live as long as we can, as well as we can, with the supports in the community to make it happen”? - what did you think about that quote from Jackie Holtzman in the beginning of the video?
- Dr. Nick Busing stated, “Providers cannot do it alone; it is a partnership between community members and practitioners” How did this make you feel? What do you think about this?
- How do you feel about the goal of “normalizing the conversation about death, dying and grieving?”
- Based on what you saw in the video, were there any particular stories or ideas that you think [our city] could benefit from?

Questions about your own community:

- Do you think you live in a compassionate community? (YES/NO/NOT SURE)
- Can you share a personal story of seeing someone going out of her/his way to offer help to others who are aging, dying, grieving or caregiving?
- What are some community supports already in place related to aging, dying, grieving, or caregiving?
- Where do you think our community support falls short in these areas?
- If our community became more involved in compassionate community work, what would that look like and how do you think our community would benefit? What might be the barriers and how would we overcome them?

Questions about Getting Community Members Involved:

- How can communities encourage compassionate community work? In other words, how can we get more of the community involved in providing support for aging, dying, grieving, and caregiving?
- What do you think motivates people to do the work of creating a compassionate community?

Tips for the discussion leader

Leave space during the conversation for participants to think. Silence is OKAY. As the facilitator, you should not skip over a topic just because there is a bit of silence.

Ask for examples and personal stories as much as possible

Acknowledgement: We would like to thank Hanna Johnston, facilitator of one of the Compassionate Ottawa Story pilot sessions, for sharing these supplementary questions with us.

