

# Battling the barriers - a systems intelligent way of increasing compassion (#297)

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## Background

Compassion at work has been linked to many positive impacts including improved well-being, leadership capability, cooperation, and commitment. Yet, studies on the barriers to compassion at work are few and they are mainly limited to healthcare.

## Aims and method

This empirical paper explores the barriers to compassion by interviewing 14 groups of managers and employees (N = 81) from five different organizations from a variety of different fields which have been exposed to training in compassion one year before.

## Results

We identify barriers in five dimensions: mindset, behavior, culture, system, and leadership. Importantly, we find that the barriers are often interrelated both within and across dimensions. The paper presents a conceptual model of the systemic sources and interrelations of the barriers to compassion in organizations.

## Conclusion

Failing to recognize not only the multidimensional sources of the barriers but these systemic interrelations between them may present a major barrier to compassion on its own – a novel finding from this study. On the contrary, understanding them could make the battling of the barriers to compassion more systems intelligent. We discuss the theoretical contributions and practical implications for managers, and offer a blueprint for optimizing compassion on an individual, community, and leadership levels.

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Authors contributing to this presentation.

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In my research I focus on compassion at work. More specifically I've studied the ways of increasing compassion and emotional skills among managers and in organizations, the barriers to compassion in organizations, and the counterpart to compassion - positive empathy in action or the skill of joining in and celebrating others' positive emotional experiences and successes, called co-passion. I've written or co-authored two popular books: one about the power of compassion and the other on the power of empathy at work. I give talks and trainings in compassion, empathy, emotional skills, and self-compassion to organizations and to leaders.

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