



## Twelve Steps to a Compassionate Life

By Karen Armstrong

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### Twelve Steps to a Compassionate Life By Karen Armstrong

In this important and thought-provoking work, Karen Armstrong—one of the most original thinkers on the role of religion in the modern world—provides an impassioned and practical guide to helping us make the world a more compassionate place.

The twelve steps she suggests begin with “Learn About Compassion,” and close with “Love Your Enemies.” In between, she takes up self-love, mindfulness, suffering, sympathetic joy, the limits of our knowledge of others, and “concern for everybody.” She shares concrete methods to help us cultivate and expand our capacity for compassion, and provides a reading list to encourage us to “hear one another’s narratives.” Armstrong teaches us that becoming a compassionate human being is a lifelong project and a journey filled with rewards.

The First Step: Learn About Compassion

The Second Step: Look at Your Own World

The Third Step: Compassion for Yourself

The Fourth Step: Empathy

The Fifth Step: Mindfulness

The Sixth Step: Action

The Seventh Step: How Little We Know

The Eighth Step: How Should We Speak to One Another?

The Ninth Step: Concern for Everybody

The Tenth Step: Knowledge

The Eleventh Step: Recognition

The Twelfth Step: Love Your Enemies



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The First Step: Learn About Compassion

The Second Step: Look at Your Own World

The Third Step: Compassion for Yourself

The Fourth Step: Empathy

The Fifth Step: Mindfulness

The Sixth Step: Action

The Seventh Step: How Little We Know

The Eighth Step: How Should We Speak to One Another?

The Ninth Step: Concern for Everybody

The Tenth Step: Knowledge

The Eleventh Step: Recognition

The Twelfth Step: Love Your Enemies

## Twelve Steps to a Compassionate Life By Karen Armstrong Bibliography

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### Editorial Review

#### From Publishers Weekly

The prolific, well-informed, and passionate Armstrong (The Case for God) writes a somewhat different book this time out, stemming from her winning a \$1,000 prize in 2007 to promote an idea worth spreading. She always has a thesis in her books as she sweeps over the historical development of world religions, but this is a book with an agenda: you ought to be more compassionate, and here™s how. So instead of being her usual somewhat academic teacher of religious history, she is more of a personal spiritual teacher, in the vein of the Dalai Lama. That task, and corresponding tone (œBe patient with yourself during this meditation•), is not her long suit. Still, this slightly self-help-y book is deeply grounded in what Armstrong knows, and presents, well: the core teachings of all religions that can make us better, more compassionate humans. The former nun pulls ideas and references from religions Eastern and Western with aplomb and respect for all sources. This counter to the religion-is-homicidal-and-superstitious school of invective passing for thought is well-informed, welcome, and practical. (Jan.)

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#### From [Booklist](#)

\*Starred Review\* It takes courage for a religious historian and writer of Armstrong's stature to step out from behind the scrim of scholarship and analysis to offer guidelines for a spiritual practice designed to make humanity a kinder and saner species. With the boon of the prestigious TED Prize, Armstrong (The Case for God, 2009) worked with "leading thinkers from a variety of major faiths" to compose a Charter for Compassion, which calls for the restoration of "compassion to the heart of religious and moral life" in a "dangerously polarized" world. Not content with merely stating lofty goals, however, Armstrong, a revered genius of elucidation and synthesis, now tells the full and profound story of altruism throughout human history. She turns to neuroscience and tracks the evolution of our brains and our natural capacity for empathy, and performs her signature mode of beautifully clarifying interpretation in a mind-expanding discussion of the history of the Golden Rule ("Always treat others as you would wish to be treated yourself"), the essence of compassion and the kernel of every religious tradition. Exquisite and affecting explications of Buddhist, Confucian, Judaic, Christian, and Islamic commentary prepare the ground for meditation exercises meant to engender "open-mindedness" and the cultivation of compassion, making for the most sagacious and far-reaching 12-step program ever. HIGH-DEMAND BACKSTORY: A hefty print run is planned for renowned religious thinker Armstrong's bold approach to teaching the compassionate ethos. --Donna Seaman

#### Review

"Rich with wisdom and provocative ideas that stimulate deeper thinking and encourage individuals to identify a particular contribution to the global effort." —*Christian Science Monitor*

"Leaning on the wisdom of disparate faiths and belief systems, Armstrong lays out a pluralistic and, ultimately, secular way to spread compassion that's easy to believe in." —*Washington Post*

"Charming. . . . Exquisitely intelligent." —*Financial Times*

"Impressive. . . . She seeks to restrain us from an ego-fuelled outlook of partiality and prejudice to an informed, expanded humanity." —*The Globe and Mail*

“When I hear that Karen Armstrong, the widely respected religion scholar...has a new book called *Twelve Steps to a Compassionate Life*, I figure it’s about big stuff—and she does not disappoint.” —Laurie Abraham, *Elle*

“[An] important and useful book that will help many readers take on humanity’s most important task: creating a better, more compassionate world.” —*Tricycle*

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#### **Jeff Brown:**

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