



# What is Compassion?

Compassion seems like an easy thing to define but there appears to be a bit of debate about what it actually means (Strauss, Lever Taylor, Gu, Kuyken, Baer, Jones, and Cavanagh, 2016 & Goetz, Keltner, and Simon-Thomas, 2010). However, it seems that most of us agree that it is a feeling related to empathy and kindness towards others.

Stories both in book and movie form are excellent ways to start building empathy and compassion towards others. When we hear and see someone's story we find ourselves in a situation where we can begin to think about that person's experiences from their perspective. Join us for Mental Health Week 2024 as we watch these movies and discuss the concept of empathy.

Our library has picked 5 movies that you can watch alone, with your partner, family, or friends. We have broken them out into age groupings and provided a short description for each. Please note, most of these films deal with topics including grief, death, and some deal with topics like physical and sexual abuse, substance abuse. A few movies may contain language or scenes that are not appropriate for all viewers. We have done our best to provide you with context to choose but if you have specific questions please contact the library for more information.

## Questions for Discussion

If you want to dig deeper and begin practicing empathy and compassion, here are some questions you can use to start a conversation with your family and friends during or after the movie.

- Where did you see empathy in the film? Give specific examples.
- What role did empathy play in the lives of the characters in the film?
- How do the characters in the film show examples of empathy?
- Were there times when you found it difficult to empathize with specific characters in the film? If so, which ones and why?
- A film can give us a small glimpse into someone's life, but it does not allow us to truly "live" their experiences. How do we empathize with experiences we've never had ourselves?
- Why do you think the filmmaker has chosen to tell this story?

# Accessing the movies

All of our movie selections are available through the Northern Lakes College library. To view any of them just navigate to our webpage at <https://www.nlclibrary.ca/> and log in using your college email and password. The log in button is in the very top right of the screen and looks like this:



All links to the movie files can be found on our Student Wellness page here:

<https://www.northernlakescollege.ca/current-students/student-wellness>

## References

- Goetz, J. L., Keltner, D., & Simon-Thomas, E. (2010). Compassion: an evolutionary analysis and empirical review. *Psychological bulletin*, 136(3), 351–374. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0018807>
- Quevillon, S., Koizumi, A., Warwick, L., and Cottingham, T. (n.d.). Learning through empathy discussion questions: Secondary level. Retrieved from [http://films.nfb.ca/pdfs/EDU\\_Learning-en-2.pdf](http://films.nfb.ca/pdfs/EDU_Learning-en-2.pdf)
- Strauss, C., Lever Taylor, B., Gu, J., Kuyken, W., Baer, R., Jones, F., & Cavanagh, K. (2016). What is compassion and how can we measure it? A review of definitions and measures. *Clinical Psychology Review*, 47, 15-27. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cpr.2016.05.004>

# Movie list

## **Movie #1 – Arrival – Rated PG**

When mysterious spacecraft touch down across the globe, an elite team - lead by expert linguist Louise Banks (Amy Adams) - are brought together to investigate. As mankind teeters on the verge of global war, Banks and the team race against time for answers — and to find them, she will take a chance that could threaten her life, and quite possibly humanity.

## **Movie #2 - Hidden Figures – Rated PG**

As the United States raced against Russia to put a man in space, NASA found untapped talent in a group of African-American female mathematicians that served as the brains behind one of the greatest operations in U.S. history. Based on the unbelievably true-life stories of three of these women, known as human computers, we follow these women as they quickly rose the ranks of NASA alongside many of history's greatest minds specifically tasked with calculating the momentous launch of astronaut John Glenn into orbit, and guaranteeing his safe return. Dorothy Vaughn, Mary Jackson, and Katherine Johnson crossed all gender, race, and professional lines while their brilliance and desire to dream big, beyond anything ever accomplished before by the human race, firmly cemented them in U.S. history as true American heroes.

## **Ferdinand – Rated G**

After Ferdinand, a bull with a big heart, is mistaken for a dangerous beast, he is captured and torn from his home. Determined to return to his family, he rallies a misfit team on the ultimate adventure.

## **The Peanuts Movie – Rated G**

For the first time ever, Snoopy, Charlie Brown and the rest of the gang we know and love from Charles Schulz's timeless Peanuts comic strip will be making their big-screen debut; like they've never been seen before in a CG-Animated Feature film in 3D.

## **Movie # 5 – Stray – Rated PG**

This beautiful film from director Elizabeth Lo brings us into the world of Zeytin, a stray dog living life on the streets of Istanbul. Deceptively simple and wonderfully touching, Stray is a tour-de-force of documentary filmmaking. Lo shows us the fragile world through Zeytin's eyes, taking the audience to seemingly impossible places, all while staying quite literally grounded. Just when you think you have settled into the rhythm of the film, the brilliance of Lo's vision becomes clear. The camera begins to focus not just on Zeytin and her ragtag bunch of fellow strays; we are also introduced to the revealing parallels of the young Syrian refugees that inhabit the same streets as these dogs.