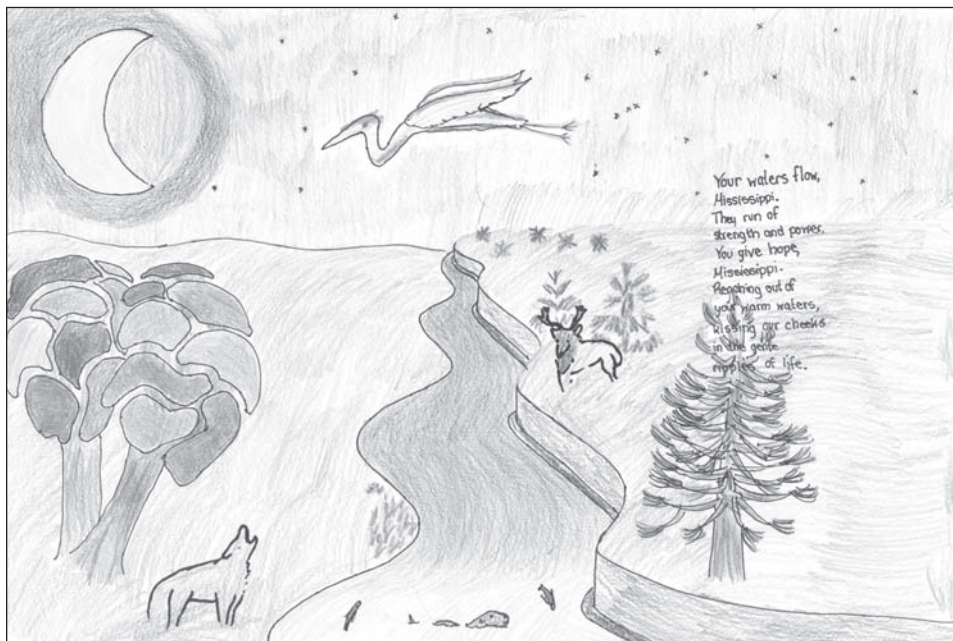


# Ideas on Compassionate Living

By **FREEMAN WICKLUND**

Animal Rights Activist



*"Your waters flow, Mississippi. They run of strength and power. You give hope, Mississippi. Reaching out of your warm waters, kissing our cheeks in the gentle ripples of life."*  
— Hannah Nesser, Capitol Hill Magnet, St. Paul, 2006 Big River Art Contest winner

Chimpanzees are social beings whose lives are filled with the company of others. In this regard, Sarah, the chimpanzee was no different. She was a subject at a psychology department who learned to communicate with humans using symbols. Her early years were spent with humans and chimpanzees that would constantly hold, groom and play with her. But then things changed.

After she was aggressive with one of the volunteers, she was moved to a new cage, permanently isolated from the company of other chimpanzees. It was unsafe for people to get close to her cage because she was now strong enough to reach through the bars, grab an arm and cause serious injury.

Zoe Weil was a new volunteer and took pity on Sarah's bleak, isolated existence. Despite the warnings, one day she spiraled

her finger in the air in front of Sarah saying, "turn around and I'll scratch your back." Sure enough, Sarah turned around, pressed her back to the cage bars and slid down so she was sitting on the ground. Zoe scratched her back.

In this story, Zoe showed compassion for Sarah and took action to alleviate it. To live compassionately requires empathy and taking personal responsibility for our decisions. Yet, in this global world, suffering is often hidden behind slick advertising and locked doors in factories, laboratories or even in our own offices or out our own back doors. Living compassionately requires the moral courage to learn about injustices and the integrity to do the right thing.



## HEALTH



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CONTINUES ➔



➤ *Compassionate Living*, CONTINUED

Take a moment to think about your place on the compassion scale and then read over these inspirational ideas:

**1. Grow your compassion!** Incorporate compassion in all of your relationships – to people, animals, the environment, and yourself. Like a muscle, the more you use your compassion, the stronger it will get. Here is a small sampling of ways to live compassionately:

- **Help people:** Do not support sweatshop-labor. Buy fair trade and union-made goods. Treat both friends and “enemies” with love. Admit your prejudices and work to remove them. Consider volunteering.
- **Help animals:** Go vegetarian, boycott fur and leather, spay and neuter your animal companions, buy products not tested on animals, and don't patronize circuses and rodeos.
- **Help the environment:** Go vegetarian, drive less, bike more, consume less, reduce your waste, use energy efficient appliances/vehicles, and take more walks in the woods.
- **Help yourself:** Most of all, take care of yourself. Don't wallow in guilt, or live in fear. If you've wronged someone, make amends. If you've been wronged, learn to forgive. Spend time in nature and socializing with friends.

**2. Nurture your compassion daily.** Pray or meditate daily to strengthen your moral courage, integrity and persistence to create a world where all beings are free of suffering and misery. Read the writings of compassionate people for inspiration, such as Jane Goodall, Mohandas Gandhi, and Albert Schweitzer.

**3. Work compassionately to live compassionately.** The majority of our waking life is spent at work, so make sure your occupation is part of the solution and not the problem. If your employer makes or sells products that harm people, animals, or the environment, look for a new job – or work diligently to reform the business.

**4. Have compassion at every meal.** Eating creatures causes so much harm to people, animals, the environment and oneself (see this for yourself at [www.GoVeg.com/theissues.asp](http://www.GoVeg.com/theissues.asp)) that dropping animals from your diet is a good initial step on the path of living compassionately.

**5. Progress not perfection.** Trying to live a compassionate life can be overwhelming. Be content with persistent and steady progress in the right direction.

Living compassionately is both challenging and personally rewarding; it also helps make the world more kind, fair, and loving. Sarah is a unique individual, yet she also represents any human, animal or ecosystem who suffers and needs help. May we all have the spirit and fortitude to show compassion for all of the Sarah's in the world. ♡

## Resources

### ON THE WEB!

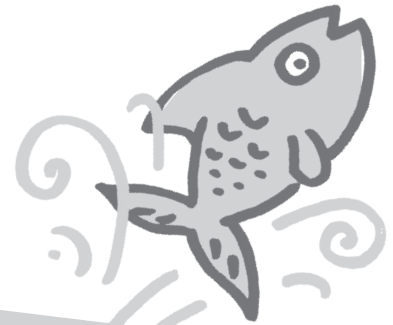
- ✿ Veggie Recipes & Tips  
[www.TryVeg.org](http://www.TryVeg.org)
- ✿ Vipassana Meditation Training  
[www.Dhamma.org](http://www.Dhamma.org)

### READ UP!

- ✿ *The Better World Handbook: From Good Intentions to Everyday Actions* by Jones, Ellis, Ross Haenfler and Brett Johnson, New Society Publishers 2001.
- ✿ *Above All, Be Kind: Raising a Humane Child in Challenging Times* by Zoe Weil, New Society Publishers 2003.

### ACT LOCALLY!

- ✿ Natural Food Co-ops  
Offering fair-trade, organic, cruelty-free, and vegetarian-specialty items.  
[www.mwnaturalfoods.coop](http://www.mwnaturalfoods.coop)
- ✿ Earthsave Twin Cities  
Holds monthly vegetarian potlucks.  
<http://twincities.earthsave.org>



Why just imagine a better world, when you can help to create one!

