



There Is No Good Card for This: What To Say and Do When Life Is Scary, Awful, and Unfair to People You Love

Kelsey Crowe, Emily McDowell

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The creator of the viral hit "Empathy Cards" teams up with a compassion expert to produce a visually stunning and groundbreaking illustrated guide to help you increase your emotional intelligence and learn how to offer comfort and support when someone you know is in pain.

When someone you know is hurting, you want to let her know that you care. But many people don't know what words to use—or are afraid of saying or doing the wrong thing. This thoughtful, instructive guide, from empathy expert Dr. Kelsey Crowe and greeting card maverick Emily McDowell, blends well-researched, actionable advice with the no-nonsense humor and the signature illustration style of McDowell's immensely popular Empathy Cards, to help you feel confident in connecting with anyone experiencing grief, loss, illness, or any other difficult situation.

Written in a how-to, relatable, we've-all-been-that-deer-in-the-headlights kind of way, *There Is No Good Card for This* isn't a spiritual treatise on how to make you a better person or a scientific argument about why compassion matters. It is a helpful illustrated guide to effective compassion that takes you, step by step by step, past the paralysis of thinking about someone in a difficult time to actually doing something (or nothing) with good judgment instead of fear.

There Is No Good Card for This features workbook exercises, sample dialogs, and real-life examples from Dr. Crowe's research, including her popular "Empathy Bootcamps" that give people tools for building relationships when it really counts. Whether it's a coworker whose mother has died, a neighbor whose husband has been in a car accident, or a friend who is seriously ill, *There Is No Good Card for This* teaches you how to be the best friend you can be to someone in need.

There Is No Good Card for This: What To Say and Do When Life Is Scary, Awful, and Unfair to People You Love Details

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Lindsaygail says

I loved this book, and wish everybody would read it. We've all been in the situation where someone we care about has had awful news or loss of some kind, and we WANT to help, but we're afraid. What if we say the wrong thing and upset them more? What if they don't want anyone to know, or bring it up? What if they cry?!

This book is a step-by-step guide (complete with delightful illustrations!) for navigating exactly these situations. It offers concrete examples and advice for being a more empathetic, caring person to those who need you. (All while reassuring the reader that you can only do so much, people probably need less from you than you're worried they might, and that you should play to your strengths while figuring out how you can help.) It examines a lot of our natural impulses in these situations and points out the kinds of things we SHOULDN'T say, while at the same time admitting we all make mistakes in this area, almost always well-intentioned ones. This book is forgiving and judgement-free, and can teach you so much.

I came out of it feeling much more confident in my ability to be a good friend when the people I love are having problems. I think most people could benefit from it, and it's a quick read as well!

Samaire says

2018 has been a rough year so far: a work colleague's house burned down, a dear friend had a mastectomy, an extended family member passed away. Tragedy has a terrible way of making me feel powerless in the wake of my loved one's suffering. This book helped me take back some control and work toward helping the people in my life. Main thoughts: DO SOMETHING - try to express your sympathy in some meaningful way, DON'T MAKE IT ABOUT YOU - and don't compare, JUST LISTEN - enough said. The illustrations are adorable, but very hard to view on kindle format (so small). Recommended for helping readers to build empathy and compassion, and gives a variety of tools and suggestions to give sympathy from a first world/American perspective.

Emily says

A great book for someone like me (i.e the socially awkward and) Also good for regular people too

Sheri says

You know how you always feel awkward when bad stuff is happening to people you care about? You never quite know what to say to or what to do. This book is a practical guide on how to be supportive in tough

situations. I highly recommend this excellent book that is well worth the read!

Offbalance says

In the crazy, far-off land known as Corporate America, citizens are often required to take exams on certain topics (such as Cyber Security or Ethics) every year or so to make sure they're in a certain level of compliance. While draconian and annoying, it's just the way things go, and something I never thought much of until I read this book. Until I read this book, I never thought citizens in the actual world should have an analogue to this process, but now I believe that every year, every human who interacts with other humans should have to read this book and pass a test based on it. I've never read anything more valuable about interacting with people having a rough time that you're either close or simply adjacent to. It's simple, direct, and incredibly effective. It's a blissfully brief read, too, with lots of plain language, pictures, and charts. It's easy to skip around to parts you immediately need, too. Do not delay - you need this book, even as a refresher course.

Melissa says

If you've ever had a family member, close friend or casual acquaintance go through something difficult, you've probably deliberated over whether or not to reach out, and how exactly to do that. You may have fretted over doing or saying the wrong thing. Until now, I've never come across a book that addresses this topic in a practical, yet humorous sort of way. A blend of social science research and quirky illustrations, this book is one-of-a-kind. It's an excellent primer on showing empathy and exercising compassion, and explaining exactly how those two things are different. It breaks down the kinds of conversations and ways of reaching out that are helpful to grieving people, and points out the well-meaning but often poorly received types of glib phrases we tend to say when people go through hardship.

The concluding section reminds readers why it matters that we care to show up for others in the first place, in a concise and beautiful way.

In short, read this book if you want to be a better human.

Cari says

Should be required reading for all people.

Laura says

This book should be mandatory reading for every human.

Meredith says

It's fantastic to encourage people to show up for others in need. People want to do this but often have no idea how, which is why this is a great topic for a book. I was very excited when I saw There Is No Good Card for This: What To Say and Do When Life Is Scary, Awful, and Unfair to People You Love. However, it was a lot less helpful than I thought it would be.

What I found helpful

The authors remind those receiving support to value what is being given even if it's not what they want and remind those giving support to give what they can give and what they want to give instead of what they feel they should give. Yes, right on! Be grateful for what you receive, and don't give out of resentful obligation.

As part of the self-evaluation in preparation for giving support to others (page 38), readers are asked to think of times when they needed support but did not receive what they felt they needed. This exercise then challenges them to ask themselves:

- * if they had fully admitted their needs at the times,
- * if they fully appreciated what was being offered instead of what they thought should have been offered,
- * if they asked the person for more than s/he could give at that time or over a series of times, and
- * if that person is a different person now.

A reoccurring theme in the book is that people expect support but are hesitant to ask for what they need and/or feel disappointed because they receive inadequate support. Being honest about what your needs are and if someone is capable of giving you that kind of support can prevent this from happening. Being appreciative of what is offered even if you would have rather had something else is also beneficial. See the previous point.

The idea of a person appointing a communications guru (page 158) is fabulous advice. This point person is then in charge of updating someone's circle of family and friends, which relieves the suffering person of the burden of telling everyone individually. This way s/he needs only to tell one person, and that person will take care of notifying everyone who needs to be notified. This is an especially good idea to prevent someone from having to relive the trauma of an event or experiencing distress with each retelling.

The authors list three instances when attempting to help someone is a bad idea (pages 81 -- 82). Sometimes you just can't help someone, and it's important to recognize this.

The list of Go-To Phrases (page 131) is great. Chapter 7 (pages 227 to 243) contains cheat sheets of what to say and what not to say as well as helpful gestures, arranged by topic. Likewise, Chapter 6 "Please Never Say This (Thanks!)" (pages 185 to 226) is a good resource for things that people in need of support generally find unhelpful. There is a list of unhelpful statements on page 206.

One of the things this book does well as point out situations in which one can easily stick one's foot in one's mouth and provides helpful scripts and tips such as being aware that if an emotional response is provoked in you as a listener that could cause you to respond in an unhelpful manner. It's not the thought that counts even though "your kindness is your credential," so watch your mouth.

The authors give a few reasons why offers of help might not be accepted (page 165), but they leave out several other valid reasons such as someone may feel uncomfortable allowing someone whom they don't know very well do [X] for them.

Kudos to the authors for recognizing that some people still value their privacy. Topics requiring discretion are listed on pages 170 to 174.

The idea that small gestures can make a big difference is an important theme. Remember: "Adequate is awesome" (page 181).

What I found to be unhelpful/questionable

This book advocates only supportive listening. Supportive listening is listening in which the person doing the listening:

- * encourages the person in need of support to talk as much as s/he likes,
- * listens without judgement even if the unfortunate situation for which someone requires support is the direct result of his/her own actions,
- * doesn't imply in any way that the speaker has any responsibility for what happened,
- * doesn't try to extract any meaning from what is being said,
- * doesn't attempt to identify any of the speaker's emotions,
- * doesn't ask any clarifying questions,
- * doesn't offer any advice or attempt to fix the problem,
- * doesn't share any related/similar experiences from his/her own life,
- * expresses no knowledge of the situation/event/illness,
- * under no circumstances says anything that can be construed as pity,
- * and makes only reaffirming non-committal remarks that are neither encouraging or discouraging.

So, basically the listening is a mostly silent sounding board on which the person in need can unload. I agree 100% that sometimes people need someone to just listen to how they feel without trying to problem solve, but there is a place for therapeutic support as well, and this book seems to disregard that.

There are no caveats on when supportive listening crosses the line into enabling or encouraging self-destructive behavior and mindsets. The example from page 93 in which the gentlemen describes how supportive his friends and family were of allowing him to talk "ad nauseam" about how his relationship with his wife was "going south" for "many years" until he finally decided to do something demonstrates this. Didn't anyone point out to him that if his marriage is on a downward trend, then maybe he should be talking to his wife instead of everyone except her or better yet talk to both his wife and a marriage counselor? That's something that a therapeutic listener should suggest, but supportive listeners aren't allowed to give advice or ask questions such as "Have you told your wife how you are feeling?" or "You should see a marriage counselor."

There's another divorce example in which the listener asks the person announcing her decision to file for divorce if she's considered how this will affect her children, which earns the listener ire from the authors.

Now this response is totally inappropriate for acquaintances, co-workers, and casual friends who should just offer this condolences and ask if there is anything they can do to help her through this difficult time, but for a close friend or relative, this may be a valid question especially if her reason for getting a divorce is "I'm not in love anymore" or "I'm just not happy" or "I met someone whom I like better than my current partner." If you're going to completely destabilize your children's lives, you owe it to them to have a compelling reason, and someone may have to kick you if you're only looking out from #1 and feel like walking out of a relationship with which you are bored. This is, of course, therapeutic and not supportive.

There are no guidelines for when to cut someone off from your support. At what point, after how many months or years, should one say, "If you aren't going to do something about this, then you need to stop talking to me about it." In one of the examples, a woman knew her husband was cheating on her for 6 out of 7 years of their marriage. The authors then criticized her sister for being unsupportive because, instead of just

placidly listening, whenever the wronged wife vented to her, her sister told her that her husband was a jerk and that she should file for divorce. Even if her sister had been a "supportive" listener, when should she have drawn the line and said either stop lamenting and accept the situation or end the relationship? After 1 year, 2 years, 3 years ... ? And why should her family and friends support her decision to persist in clearly unhealthy behavior. This is never explained, and it should be.

There is also a lot of entitlement and obligation to reach out, which I personally didn't like. One reason other generations are down on Millennials is that they reveal their innermost feelings to total strangers and expect others to actualize them and unconditionally support their every action, belief, thought, and feeling not matter what.

There are a lot of unrealistic expectations on the part of the person needing support. For example, there is an anecdote in which the neighborhood butcher tells acquaintances about her divorce and then is offended when they respond with sympathy because she's actually happy about getting divorce. How are acquaintances supposed to know that? And why is she divulging this to near strangers? Is she fishing for dates? *I've always admired you when you visit my meat counter. Now that I'm getting divorced, we should hook up.* If it's great news that she's sharing, then maybe she should have prefaced this revelation with "I have great news," which would have clued in the listener to the response she wanted.

In another example, the person is offended because she felt optimistic about her cancer diagnosis, but the person to whom she was talking responded with an "I'm sorry. This must be terrible for you." Usually, people are offended when others are dismissively optimistic about things like potentially fatal serious illnesses (see pages 204 to 207). What kind of response did she expect? Why was correcting the listener that this is something about which she feels optimistic not enough to prevent lasting hurt feelings?

That's another thing. There is a lot of contradictory advice. The reader is told both that s/he should and shouldn't say "I'm sorry" and that s/he should and shouldn't ask "How are you?" Sometimes reaching out to someone who may need support what one should do and sometimes it's wildly insensitive. You can feel bad for them, but hell hath no fury if that sympathy crosses the line into anything that could be interpreted as pity.

I was very confused by this. This is precisely why people who want to reach out often don't. They don't want to put their foot in a no-win situation in which it's not *the thought that counts*. I agree that people often say horribly insensitive things with the best intentions. (And I'm not talking about jackasses giving snide armchair commentary here.) While it's hurtful, it's best not to personalize this -- personalization being one of the ten most common cognitive distortions -- and remember that it's *the thought that counts*. But this book emphasizes that it isn't the thought that counts; it's being helpful that counts. Then to compound that, basically every way a person can respond besides silence and reaffirming nothings that encourage someone to talk is framed as detrimental. This strikes me as somewhat dubious.

Rose Ann says

I think everyone should read this book! Whether you currently know someone in a crisis or not. It really makes you step back and take a minute to realize how things you say (or don't say) affect people. And most importantly...to listen.

So much more to say about this book....I have it littered with post-it's!

Easy to read!

Kathryn says

This book is such a good idea. All of us are faced with what to do or say when tragedy strikes family and friends. This book is colorful, has whimsical illustrations and talks about how to listen, what to say, how to act and what not to do. Did I learn very much? Not really yet it was so nice to be reminded that doing something, no matter how small is oh so important.

⌘?? Kat ⌘? says

EVERYONE SHOULD READ THIS BOOK!

It discusses what to do to help people who are in distress - what you can say, and if you aren't great at talking/listening, what you can do to help. It also states phrases that are very common, that really aren't that helpful.. such as "I know how you feel" or "Maybe you should (insert unwanted advice here.)" All in all, this is a great, super informing read.

Sara says

Everyone should read this! How many times in your life have you wanted to be helpful towards someone going through a rough patch but felt awkward about what to do or say? This book outlines how to really "be there" for others in terms even the most emotionally/socially backward among us can comprehend. Here's the great part--it doesn't take much! Turns out our smallest efforts can make the biggest difference for those we care about. Great resource for real life!

Sharon says

Didn't love this one. Not that it was bad - just not written in a way that I could relate to.

Colona Public Library says

I saw this book in an article that listed some books about self-improvement for the new year (Jan. 2018 is fast approaching!) And I thought this book was an incredible idea! I see and talk to so many patrons and when they are experiencing a loss or some hard times and I always wondered if I'm saying or doing the right things. If you can remember that your kindness is your credential, listening speaks volumes, and small gestures make a big difference then you will go a long way. This book covers a lot, has examples of conversations, the pages have an easy reading format (some fun fonts and illustrations occasionally), and I like the reviews of what was covered at the end of chapters. This book was very helpful, there are a few things in here that are going to stick with me for sure! I highly recommend! ~Ashley

