



"Dogen Zen-ji said, "To know yourself is to forget yourself." We might think that knowing ourselves is a very ego-centered thing, but by beginning to look so clearly and so honestly at ourselves—at our emotions, at our thoughts, at who we really are—we begin to dissolve the walls that separate us from others. Somehow all of these walls, these ways of feeling separate from everything else and everyone else, are made up of opinions. They are made up of dogma; they are made of prejudice. These walls come from our fear of knowing parts of ourselves."

Pema Chodron

As Eliza says, we have to differentiate between compassion and its near enemy 'pity'. Pity allows one to deliver help from a safe distance, from an aloof height. Compassion has that 'co' prefix, and that means co-suffering, sharing another's suffering by jumping into the mire with them. To me this isn't about forcing oneself to care about something or someone because we 'should,' but more about seeing through and removing the barriers of self we erect around ourselves to protect ourselves from others, but that also insulate us from their suffering. Compassion arises naturally when we dare to be less self-protective; allow ourselves to be more open and vulnerable. And being less self-centred creates more awareness space for seeing the needs of others.