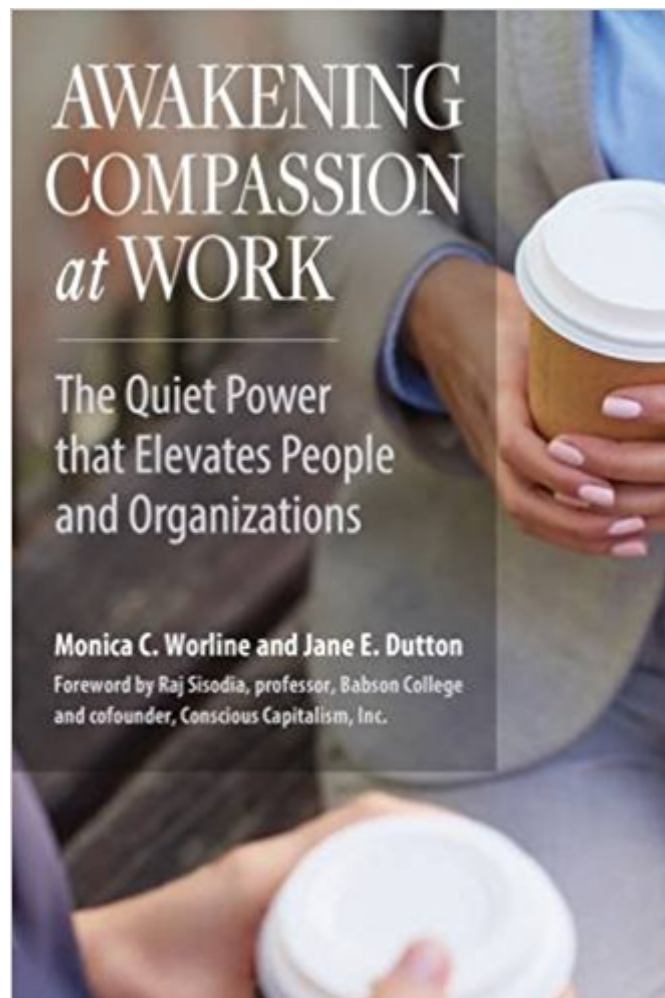




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# **Awakening Compassion At Work: The Quiet Power That Elevates People And Organizations**



## Synopsis

Caring Is a Competitive Advantage Suffering in the workplace can rob our colleagues and coworkers of humanity, dignity, and motivation and is an unrecognized and costly drain on organizational potential. Marshaling evidence from two decades of field research, scholars and consultants Monica Worline and Jane Dutton show that alleviating such suffering confers measurable competitive advantages in areas like innovation, collaboration, service quality, and talent attraction and retention. They outline four steps for meeting suffering with compassion and show how to build a capacity for compassion into the structures and practices of an organization—because ultimately, as they write, “Compassion is an irreplaceable dimension of excellence for any organization that wants to make the most of its human capabilities.”

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

“A remarkably thorough and compelling read that will remind you how much more potential exists if we can bring more care and compassion into our organizations.”—Tom Rath, New York Times bestselling author of StrengthsFinder 2.0  
“Awakening Compassion at Work takes a candid look at both the joy and the suffering present in our workplaces. How we frankly acknowledge that suffering and transform it is a critical competency for any leader in the 21st century. This book is a marvelous guide for that transformation.”—Pat Christen, Managing Director, The Omidyar Group  
“The definitive guide to research and practice on unleashing compassion at work. The world’s leading experts reveal how we can build teams and

organizations where people stop checking their values at the office door and start caring about each other. —Adam Grant, *New York Times* bestselling author of *Give and Take* and *Originals*

“Work is a place where most of us spend a large percentage of our waking hours. Yet for many, the workplace remains a source of stress and anxiety. In their landmark book, *Worline* and Dutton give us an overview of the problem and science based solutions. It will help individuals not only in the workplace but in their lives. For the employer, it is a powerful tool to give employees meaning in their work and to increase creativity, productivity, and ultimately shareholder value.” —James R. Doty, MD, Clinical Professor of Neurosurgery and founder and Director of the Center for Compassion and Altruism Research and Education, Stanford University School of Medicine, and *New York Times* bestselling author of *Into the Magic Shop*

“The go-to book on the hottest new trend in the corporate world: compassion. *Worline* and Dutton have spent years researching positive deviance: how to bring greater humanity to the workplace. Their work is groundbreaking: a compassionate workplace is happier, healthier, and more productive. Packed with real-world examples of the many companies they have advised and researched, *Awakening Compassion at Work* is for all those who want to see themselves and their company succeed to its full potential.” —Emma Seppälä, PhD, Science Director, Center for Compassion and Altruism Research and Education, Stanford University, and author of *The Happiness Track*

“In today’s ever so fast-paced, technological, and profit-driven world, our humanity in the workplace is all too often passed over or even forgotten. *Awakening Compassion at Work* not only contains memorable examples of noticing, interpreting, feeling, and acting on suffering in the workplace but also provides a toolkit for engaging colleagues in using compassionate actions to create new norms and routines that nurture our bonding together and resilience to innovate, collaborate, and improve our work environment. I highly recommend that you read this enjoyable and forward-thinking book to awaken your compassionate self, not only at work, but also at home.” —Roger Newton, Executive Chairman and Chief Scientific Officer, Esperion Therapeutics, Inc.

“Seldom do we get a gift that helps us step outside of our self-centered lives into noticing and caring about others — beyond feeling for them to helping reduce suffering and make others’ lives and work fulfilling. *Worline* and Dutton offer us the emotional glue that binds our social fabric in organizations and cultures through compassion. Steeped in rigorous research but without the obfuscation of academia, the book draws you in with engaging stories and gives you hope with the authors’ exercises and guidance in how to reduce the toxicity of guilt and blame and create a new social architecture of caring. Read it — it will fill your soul!” —Richard Boyatzis, PhD, Distinguished University Professor, Departments

of Psychology, Cognitive Science, and Organizational Behavior, Case Western Reserve University, and coauthor of *Primal Leadership*—“Monica Worline and Jane Dutton are the world’s experts on the subject of compassion in organizations. Theirs was the first research conducted on this topic almost two decades ago, and their insight and practical wisdom is captured in this volume. This is the statement on what we know and what we can do about the subject of compassion in organizations.”

—Kim Cameron, PhD, William Russell Kelly Professor of Management and Organizations, Ross School of Business, and Professor of Higher Education, School of Education, University of Michigan—“With *Awakening Compassion at Work*, Monica Worline and Jane Dutton bring to bear their academic brilliance, sizable hands-on experience in business and psychology, and a gift for getting to the core of a principle that is essential to individual and organizational success. Using in-depth research, collaborative explorations in first-rate organizations, a boatload of meaningful and moving examples, and practical guidelines for igniting the remarkable power of compassion, the authors have fashioned an essential, pragmatic, and fascinating book that will be riveting reading for anyone in the workplace.”

—Ari Cowan, Director General, The International Center for Compassionate Organizations—“In our rapid-change, hypercompetitive, and global economy, encountering a compassionate leader can be rare; being embraced within a compassionate organization culture even more so. In contrast to this harsh organizational anthropology, Worline and Dutton set forth with conceptual clarity and rich exemplification practices that empirically lead toward a compassionate organizational milieu. Any leader perusing this manuscript will experience a shift in consciousness. Enacting the new wisdom will radically change an organization’s culture.”

—André L. Delbecq, PhD, Professor of Management and Senior Fellow, Ignatian Center for Jesuit Education, Santa Clara University—“If you are one of the many who think compassion has no place in business, read this book. Extraordinary performance comes from tapping into the full power of your team. After more than thirty years in business, one thing is clear to me: compassion is central in a culture that gets extraordinary results.”

—David Drews, founder and CEO, Justus Equity, LLC—“Suffering is inevitable and can reveal itself anytime, anywhere. This inspiring book will transport you into work worlds that dare to care. Discoveries from the Compassion Lab spring to life in vivid stories of how compassion and work go hand in hand in successful organizations. Most importantly, Worline and Dutton offer practical guidance on how to reshape the social architecture of your organizations to support the improvisation of authentic compassionate acts. This book holds the power to open hearts worldwide.”

—Barbara L. Fredrickson, PhD, Kenan Distinguished Professor of Psychology and Neuroscience, The University of North Carolina at

Chapel Hill, and author of *Positivity* and *Love 2.0*—“Groundbreaking! Based on fifteen years of scholarly research, this book makes the case for compassion in the workplace—both interpersonally and systemically—and offers a clear blueprint for how to do it. The authors offer design principles and nuanced examples that reflect the day-to-day reality of organizational life, encouraging and empowering readers to go out and try it for themselves. This book is destined to change many lives for the better.”—Christopher Germer, PhD, faculty, Harvard Medical School, author of *The Mindful Path to Self-Compassion*, and co-editor of *Mindfulness and Psychotherapy*—“What we produce and how we produce the goods and services all around us is one of the most important human issues of our age. From the sweatshops of Asia to the boardrooms of high technology, we know that there can be considerable competitive pressures that cause great stress and at times deeply immoral behavior. Dutton and Worline are world leaders and pioneers in the extraordinarily important turn toward more compassionate work. Here is a book that outlines in detail some of the challenges a compassionate approach to work confronts and how to deal with them. This is an outstanding book that will be a classic for years to come. It will aid greatly the human endeavor to create a more compassionate world.”—Paul Gilbert, PhD, FBPSS, OBE, Professor, Centre for Compassion Research and Training, College of Health and Social Care Research Centre, University of Derby—“Hurrah! Worline and Dutton have made the business case for compassion and created a road map for bringing it to life in any organization. Their courage and clear seeing lead us to a more productive and positive future.”—Edi Pasalis, MBA, MTS, Director, Kripalu Institute for Extraordinary Living—“Workplaces are often toxic and actually give rise to human suffering. Drawing on extensive research, the authors show the many positive outcomes of recognizing and confronting this truth. With great skill they show us how to create organizations that alleviate suffering and awaken compassion. This is a must-read that will be with us for a very long time.”—Robert E. Quinn, PhD, Professor, Ross School of Business, University of Michigan, and author of *The Positive Organization*—“The value of this book is that it clearly articulates not only why but how to stimulate cultural elements that will make alleviation of suffering through compassion an everyday occurrence for any organization that desires to do so. I am blown away with the authors’ ability to move this complex and oft-avoided concept of compassion into an easily accessible initiative for any organization. Not only does this benefit individuals experiencing suffering, but thanks to the clear strategies for implementation, profound cultural strengthening can occur.”—Fred Keller, founder and Chair, Cascade Engineering

Renowned scholars and consultants Monica Worline and Jane Dutton offer a new argument for compassion in organizations, showing leaders how to tap their innate ability for compassion to create more effective and humane workplaces.

Do you remember how, after 9-11, we were so gentle with each other? It makes you wonder, when compassion is lost, what else is lost? When it's regained, what becomes possible? Why is compassion so fragile? At the grocery store someone feels compassion for a panhandler by the entrance. Next time they might avoid that same person's eyes or feel a tinge of scorn at their hand-written sign. It's not that different in the workplace, where compassion can bloom or perish in an instant. Compassion can be quick to materialize in one department, hollow or non-existent in another department. How can compassion become more resilient? How can it be cultivated by individuals, not just in daily life, but especially at work? And is it possible for compassion to reach the point where it becomes an organizational competence? The authors are world-class experts on questions like these. This is the first book to wrap its arms around several decades of research into the role of compassion in the workplace. This is also the first book to catalog the benefits and explain why, at the organizational level, compassion is worth the effort. The intended audience is not just an HR partner, OD professional, or leadership team. It includes anyone interested in the life of groups. Indirectly this book can serve as a concrete introduction to organizational psychology. Part Two shows, in exquisite slow motion, how compassion unfolds, or doesn't. Just studying those four chapters will be enough to heighten your sensitivity to both the surfacing and the suppressing that takes place around you. But how to respond? At its heart this book is practical, helping us find pathways for expression and action. At an organizational level, there's a complete set of tools and blueprints that help us move from good intentions to organizational competence. And the book is well written. Just reading the stories (all of which are authentic) would be an education in itself. The authors respect, equally, both beauty and evidence. Around the globe, so many of us are now wondering how to regain and deepen compassion on a national scale. Is that too much to hope for? Not if we awaken compassion in ourselves, and not if we start learning how to weave compassion into the fabric of our organizations.

This is a beautifully composed work that illustrates an alternative possibility for how we can (should!) engage one another in the workplace. For those who see "compassionate workplace" as an oxymoron, this book will open your eyes to recognizing ways that

each one of us can contribute to and help grow a more humane organization. The real-world examples of companies that have already embedded a culture of compassion into their daily lives are inspirational and heartwarming, but they also provide a road map for how others can aspire to and achieve similar results. Articulate, intelligent, and clearly a labor of love by two experts in the field of compassion at work - authors Monica Worline and Jane Dutton - this is a work that should be read thoroughly, carefully, and shared with many.

Reading this book not only makes me aspire to be a more compassionate person but also shows me how to do it! Worline and Dutton do an amazing job of providing a science-based trove on how to become a more passionate person, leader, and organization. They unpack years of research (both their own as well as other scholars in many fields) to help readers understand what compassion is and why it is so critical in a work context. There is always suffering in the workplace, whether generated in the doing of the work (such as a downsizing or an incivility) or outside of work (such as a personal or family illness or traumatic life event). I have certainly been the beneficiary of many compassionate responses in my own life from work colleagues - so I know they make a world of difference. I find the four stage model of compassionate responding to be very intuitive and useful. Compassion indeed is the culmination of noticing, interpreting, feeling, and acting. For me, I realize that too often I want to move straight to action, but without the earlier steps my response is likely to be incomplete or even harmful. The stories the authors weave into the narrative are brilliant and inspiring -- they really unpack the complexities of compassion at work. It is so much more than being nice to others! The second part of the book is focused on what it takes to build compassionate organizations. Again, the story line is powerful because the authors draw on research as well as real world examples to build the case for how to envision, understand, design and lead with compassion. Their story of Zeke helps us see the possibilities for building a truly compassionate organization. Whether you already live in a compassionate workplace and want to take it to the next level or you are struggling with how to help make your organization or leadership more compassionate, this book is for you. You won't be the same person after reading it!

This book is an incredibly powerful response to suffering in the world. While it extensively discusses the suffering in the workplace witnessed and researched by the authors over nearly two decades, it also feels extremely timely because the pain endemic to the workplace is now manifesting itself in our wider culture. This book can bear witness to this pain in multiple ways. Have you intuitively felt that organizations that care about their employees are not only better places to work, but are also

more profitable and successful? Monica and Jane show you that your instinct is spot on. Want to see examples of what compassionate workers, teams, and organizations look like? The stories in this book are incredibly compelling. Do you want to know how to assess your own organization demonstrates compassion, and enables its workers to exhibit it? My favorite section, near the end, guides you through simple but powerful tools for making yourself a compassion architect, and your organization a compassionate one. If you want to be a candle against the darkness of our times, read this book.

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