

Compassion - For Our World

From the February 2025 e-Peace Update

www.MattiesPeaceFoundation.org



For Our World by Mattie J.T. Stepanek September 11, 2001

We need to stop.
Just stop.
Stop for a moment...
Before anybody
Says or does anything
That may hurt anyone else.

We need to be silent.
Just silent.
Silent for a moment...
Before we forever lose
The blessing of songs
That grow in our hearts.

We need to notice.
Just notice.
Notice for a moment...
Before the future slips away
Into ashes and dust of humility.

Stop, be silent, and notice...
In so many ways, we are the same.
Our differences are unique treasures.
We have, we are, a mosaic of gifts
To nurture, to offer, to accept.

We need to be.
Just be.
Be for a moment...
Kind and gentle,
Innocent and trusting,
Like children and lambs,
Never judging or vengeful
Like the judging and vengeful.

And now, let us pray,
Differently, yet together,
Before there is no earth, no life,
No chance for peace.

In Just Peace: A Message of Hope (AMP 2006)

Mattie's For Our World peace passage – penned on September 11, 2001 – is a reflection on personal pain. It is also a response to recognition of global pain. And, it is a message about how we can reach out, and move forward – with compassion, even amid chaos.

On September 10, 2001, 11-year-old Mattie high-fived many New York fire fighters after a long weekend of softball and shenanigans – all a part of an annual IAFF/MDA event that raises funds to support hope for people with neuromuscular disease.

So, on September 11, he knew that many of those firefighters would be back at work. And while he didn't yet know which friends he would be grieving, he knew that he was watching some of them perish as the World Trade Centers collapsed with 343 firefighters inside.

Mattie was very quiet for much of that long ago Tuesday. As midnight drew near, he and I considered how we could, and would, move forward into September 12.

I remember Mattie struggling for words, saying that his grief and tears were not just for the loss of his personal friends, but also for the too many people in spaces of the world where such acts of injustice and unkindness and violence were not shocking – but a tragic and regular truth.

He then paused, and penned For Our World – as a poem, as a prayer, and as what he hoped might one day become an international passage for peace.

[Click here for an audio/visual version of
Mattie reading For Our World](#)

Now, nearly a quarter century later, the timeless and universal message Mattie offers in For Our World continues to serve as a template for how we can each pause, and then move into some next moment – with purpose that cultivates peace. Mattie was, and is, a role model for considering and choosing words and actions and characteristics that exemplify and echo peace. He had, and he still has, a way of gently guiding us as we make choices about things that matter.

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Compassion matters.

For 20 years – “a generation” – I have served as a leader for Mattie’s namesake Foundation.

I have shaped his messages of Heartsongs and hope, and peace and purpose and play, and shared them in resources and programs and activities.

I have mentored youth and adults in better understanding peace as both personal and community choices – so that we can cultivate peace in attitudes and actions and rebuild the mosaic of humanity.

And here we are in 2025, and I still look out at a world of individuals and communities who are struggling with challenges, with chaos, and with the need for compassion.

Mattie was correct when he reminded us that peace is a journey, not a destination.

I miss my conversations with my son – filled with philosophical musings and also practical plans for coping and continuing the quest to be a part of creating a better world. We would nurture each other’s positivity, rather than become overwhelmed with the negativity that is so often in the news.

I have to admit, there have been some recent days and weeks during which I have wondered how I will personally cope with what seems to be mounting challenges and chaos, much less mentor others in moving forward.

But, I also have to say that when I choose to pause – as Mattie did – and sift and sort through the many tragic and also triumphant truths, I can root myself in resilience, and make choices that are good for me, and good for others, and good for our world.

A pause is not about ceasing to make peace something that matters; instead, it is a chance to reflect, so that we can respond rather than react to challenges. It is an opportunity to “choose to inhale” as Mattie encouraged, rather than just “breathe to exist.” This can strengthen us as we reach out – with concern and compassion.

For me, a pause in the middle of challenges gives me a moment to connect with my inner “grit, grace, and gratitude” so that I can keep focusing on things that matter – like people and peace.

It is not always easy to pause in our busy world, or to focus on challenges with a perspective that seeks positivity – but it is always worthy.

Our January e-Peace Update introduced our 2025 theme: A Time for Compassion.

In this February e-Peace Update, we are re-introducing Mattie’s For Our World message.

Throughout the year, we will explore this poetic passage a few lines at a time, taking a more in-depth look at Mattie’s message of how we can cope with and grow forthward from any personal or community or global challenge.

For now, I ask folks simply to read For Our World – silently or aloud, alone or with a group, at home or in schools or offices or places of worship.

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Read the poem... pause... and then →→→

Reflect



Reflect on the message
Mattie is sharing
and on
our compassion theme:

Consider that
“compassion is for all people” –
and should not be just a kindness
or respect for folks who look or live or
think or pray or vote or love like us.

Consider that
“compassion is for all times” –
and should not be just a moment of
charity or reaction to a disaster or
crisis or heart-wrenching challenge.

Respond



Respond to the message
Mattie is sharing
and on
our compassion theme:

What part of this message
calls to your heart and mind?

What part of this message
is most challenging to consider?

What can a “pause”
during a challenge do
for you? for others? for our world?

Reach out



Reach out with your thoughts
on this message
and on
our compassion theme:

Encourage a conversation
about compassion - for our world.

Share your thoughts with us at
INFO@MattiesPeaceFoundation.org

Compassion matters.

Compassion can help us, and help others, cope with personal and global pain. And it can help us build connections of hope that strengthen us as we continue cultivating pathways to peace as we journey forward – together.

Peace matters, and so do you.
Jeni Stepanek, PhD (Mama Peace)
February 2025