**Compassion Exercise No. 3: Become a Poet Laureate**

**Introduction:** Poetry is a great way of expressing emotions, either by reading poems or writing them. This exercise will explore compassion through poetry. Participants may find a passage they wish to read or write their own literary masterpiece.

**To Begin:** Facilitators, please bring a few poetry books, either from a local library or from your own collection. Invite participants to bring books to share as well, along with a pen and notebook.

**Instructions:** Encourage everyone to become a poet laureate by tapping into their creative genius. The topic is “compassion” in however someone wishes to express it through words. For those who choose not to write a poem, ask them to peruse the books available and choose a poem to read while others construct a short poem. Make sure that writers are aware that this is a “first draft” and that no one is to expect perfection of themselves or others.

**Starter Exercise for Writers:** Ask your writers, “When you think of the word ‘compassion’ what does it bring to mind?” Have them take about five minutes in a stream of consciousness exercise, where they list all the things that represent compassion in the world. It can be anything from seeing a grandparent holding the hand of their grandchild or someone opening the door for a stranger to rain after a draught (even the universe can exhibit compassion). Stop them after five minutes and suggest they use those thoughts in their poem.

Have participants take about ten to fifteen minutes to create their poem – whether it is three lines or thirty. Bring the group of readers and writers back together and ask that each person read a passage, or their work, to the group.

**Guidelines:**

* It is okay for someone to choose not to read a poem.
* Participants should be respectful of those presenting original works as well as readers presenting published works.