

Hip hop tjolahopp

"If you are very strong, you must also be very kind", says the film *Do you know Pippi Longstocking?* from 1969. The film made the captivating children's book character Pippi famous. She was born in 1945 as the brainchild of Swedish author Astrid Lindgren. Pippi is a strong and kind girl who can lift a horse over her head, sleeps with her feet on the pillow (boots on), help her friends and easily does impossible things all the time. A wonderful character who dares, cares and shares.

The title song of the film brings a catchy melody and wonderful lyrics by Lindgren:

"Here comes Pippi Longstocking. Hopp tjolahej tjola hopcheerie" or even better in the original Swedish version: "Tjolahopp, tjolahej, tjolahoppsan-sa"

Tjolahopp!

Over the many years that I have been giving talks and lectures about empathy, compassion, friendship and love - the building of relationships - I have always used the expression *tjolahopp* to explain a beautiful idea created by the American psychologist Barbara Fredrickson: *micromoments*.

Our life is hopefully full of micromoments: When we meet someone at the sidewalk that gives way for us by moving a step aside, or someone holds the door open for us, or the bus waits for a few seconds for us to run up and catch it. We exchange a smile and an eye-contact of gratitude. Such small exchanges with strangers or friends is what Fredrickson calls micromoments. They show up in our physiology: Our heart-rate, hormone-levels in the blood and mood changes instantly when we feel the *tjolahopp* of helping someone or getting helped. It is an important part of our daily life. Our mood can be changed for an entire day when we get an early *tjolahopp* in the morning commute to work.

Fredrickson's idea is that we accumulate such moments of *tjolahopp*. A few moments every months and we have made someone a good neighbour or a trusted colleague. Many more moments over years and we have a friend. Many, many moments through many intense interactions and we have love. We create bonds by having *tjolahopp* moments together. The more, the merrier.

Tjolahopp!

We treat people better when we have accumulated *tjolahopp*-moments with them. It is in fact difficult to

be cruel to someone that you have shared a lot of kind eye-contacts with. You start liking people when you know them (well, ok: *most* of them).

To share *tjolahopps* means that you want to treat them kindly. And the more strength you have, the kinder you want to be.

Hate, on the other hand, is all about refusing to share micromoments, eye contacts, co-movements, dancing and *tjulahopp*. "I refuse you, I block you, I deny your existence" is the attitude of the one who hates.

Choosing between an attitude of love or hate is really the choice between being open and being closed. In openness there is room for compassion. But not in being closed.

The seven kinds of compassion described in hip hop culture shows us this - but also why compassion is so difficult.

1. Compassion for family: When you love and show openness, compassion grows. When you are bitter and close down, so that you don't listen and refuse to look the other in the eyes, there can be no compassion.

2. **Compassion for strangers:** As long as you see the other as a real human being, an endlessly deep and rich person (like yourself), there can be compassion. The moment you see the other one as a mere concept, a label - someone from the wrong neighbourhood, the wrong family, the wrong gender, the wrong taste of music - there is no compassion. You cannot care for a cliché.
3. **Compassion for Global Neighbours:** If you reduce the other person to her race, colour, nationality, political views or dance style - here is no compassion, no empathy, no micromoments. For the *tjulahopp* to happen you must see the other as a person, an individual, not as a member of another ethnic group.
4. **Compassion for animals:** Every animal is an individual. It has a life history, intentions, relationships and a role to play in the local ecosystem. You influence the life of the animal and it influences your life. When you see a bird, greet a dog, caress a cat or smile to a cow you create a little *tjolahopp* moment for the animal and for yourself, animal to animal. Don't be shy. Care about it and take care of it.

5. **Compassion for the Earth:** The planet is a person. A personality. A living system. It lives and thrives. And you actually mean something to it. You pollute it, you inhabit it, you take care of it, you use up its resources, you garden it. Humans have strength and power. Humans should be kind. Compassion for the planet.
6. **Compassion for the poor and dispossessed:** Share. The more you give the happier you become. It is no fun to be rich if everyone around you is starving. Not only will they want to take what they need themselves, but they will never look you in your eyes with love. You will feel cold and lonesome. Share, dare and care. You need tjolahopp moments. Not anxiety.
7. **Compassion for future generations:** Life is all about passing it on. To kids, to fellow human beings, to the environment, to the future. The meaning of life is that the show goes on. That is why life is life and living beings are living. The future is what makes the present full of meaning, lust and bliss. Imagine! Children of the future are already here - you can feel them as love, as beauty, as warmth.

Tjolahopp!

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