

# Compassion *in* Action Program

## Empathy Exercise

Ask one table team member to read "Minnie Remembers" aloud. Then answer the table discussion questions in your workbook.

## Minnie Remembers

by [Donna Swanson](#)

An old lady sits alone in her room and remembers. Awarded the Golden Eagle Film award in '77 and reprinted hundreds of times since it was written in '74, 'Minnie' was shared on AD shortly after being written.

God, my hands are old.  
I've never said that out loud before,  
but they are.  
I was so proud of them once.  
They were soft  
like the velvet smoothness of a firm, ripe peach.  
Now the softness is more like worn-out sheets  
or withered leaves.  
When did these slender, graceful hands  
become gnarled, shrunken claws?  
When, God?  
They lie here in my lap,  
naked reminders of this body  
that has served me too well.

How long has it been since someone touched me?  
Twenty years?  
Twenty years I've been a widow;  
Respected  
Smiled at,  
But never touched.  
Never held so close that loneliness  
was blotted out.

I remember how my mother used to hold me, God.  
When I was hurt in spirit or in flesh,  
she would gather me close,  
stroke my silky hair  
and caress my back with her warm hands.  
O God, I'm so lonely!

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I remember the first boy who ever kissed me.  
We were both so new at that.  
The taste of young lips and popcorn,  
the feeling inside of mysteries to come.

I remember Hank and the babies.  
How else can I remember them but together?  
Out of the fumbling, awkward attempts of new lovers  
came the babies.  
And as they grew, so did our love.  
And God, Hank didn't seem to mind  
if my body thickened and faded a little.  
He still loved it and touched it.  
and we didn't mind if we were no longer beautiful.  
And the children hugged me a lot.  
O God, I'm lonely.

God, why didn't we raise the kids to be silly  
and affectionate  
as well as dignified and proper?

You see, they do their duty.  
They drive up in their fine cars.  
They come to my room and pay their respects.  
They chatter brightly and reminisce.  
But they don't touch me.  
They call me "Mom"  
or "Mother"  
or "Grandma".

Never Minnie.  
My mother called me Minnie.  
So did my friends.  
Hank called me Minnie, too.  
But they're gone now,  
And so is Minnie.  
Only Grandma is here.  
And God, she's lonely!

c.1974, Donna Swanson/ SPLINTERS OF LIGHT