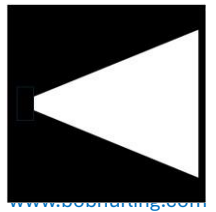


# Woke, Anti-Woke or . . . ?



## Overview

Is there a better way to navigate today's cultural divides? New research suggests that both woke and anti-woke positions can pull us into rigid, authoritarian patterns. But another path may exist. Could greater self-compassion offer a way for individuals to recognise injustice without becoming trapped by it, helping people stay engaged without losing agency or emotional balance?

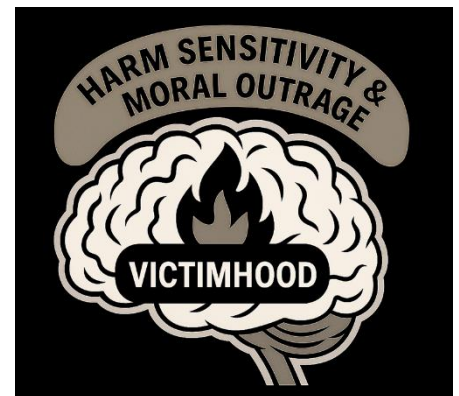
## Key Findings & Insights

A 2024 review by Gray and Kubin highlights how powerful victimhood is in shaping both morality and politics. Our minds are wired to be sensitive to harm and injustice, but this same sensitivity can pull people into moral absolutism, self-righteousness, and polarisation. Both personal and group identities become easily entangled in victim narratives, feeding division.



Authoritarian thinking can emerge from both directions. Krispenz and Bertrams (2023) examined left-wing authoritarianism and found that individuals who support radical dismantling of societal hierarchies often score high on narcissism and psychopathy

These traits suggest that some use progressive rhetoric less to seek equality and more to satisfy personal needs for dominance and aggression. At the same time, Samaras (2025) shows how anti-woke movements have been weaponised in Europe to restrict rights, attack minorities, and push far-right agendas, equally relying on authoritarian impulses framed around preserving tradition and identity



Rather than being drawn into these opposing moral camps, some psychological research suggests a more constructive approach. Ferrari et al. (2019) conducted a meta-analysis of self-compassion interventions, finding strong benefits across multiple areas of wellbeing

Self-acceptance through self-compassion offers more than individual solace, it serves as a catalyst for healthier social environments. A meta-analysis (Liu et al 2025) found that higher self-compassion is consistently linked with greater prosocial behaviours, from cooperation and trust to empathy and generosity, reflecting the psychological shift from self-focus to shared humanity. In effect, self-compassion donates the emotional bandwidth needed to engage fairly with others and to uphold norms of mutual care and justice, helping to cultivate more harmonious, equitable communities.

## Conclusion

Both woke and anti-woke movements risk pulling people into rigid moral battles that leave little room for personal growth. The real opportunity may be less about choosing sides and more about choosing how we engage. Self-compassion helps individuals stay aware of injustice while staying free from the emotional traps of victimhood, grievance, and moral absolutism. It's not about denying problems, it's about responding to them in ways that allow us to move forward and get more out of life.

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