

Meditation of Innate Compassion and Wisdom

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You can progressively practice the Meditations of Innate Love and Wisdom for months before taking up this meditation on compassion regularly. Compassion is a form of love, the form of love that wishes beings free of suffering and its causes so they can be deeply well. The following meditation, draws on the secure core of love, compassion and awareness that we have established in the prior meditations of Innate Love and Wisdom. With that secure core in place, it can now feel safe enough to become more conscious of our own difficult feelings, so we can let them inform our empathy for others who have similar feelings. In this way, **we learn to experience our own suffering feelings as *connecting* instead of isolating, drawing us into compassionate solidarity with others right through our feelings.** This meditation can be a joyful discovery, because it provides a way to experience our own painful feelings not as disconnecting and meaningless but as profoundly meaningful and deeply connecting.

Compassion for self and others helps the mind release its grip and settle into its deep nature—the unity of space, cognizance and warmth that is our natural wisdom. By resting in its expansive natural wisdom, the mind can further unleash its capacities of love and compassion. As compassion and wisdom empower each other in that way, they become a force for healing and compassionate action.

For fuller explanations, please see the manual *Awakening through Love* by John Makransky, and the supportive audios, videos and readings at sustainablecompassion.org.

Preparing for Meditation Taking our Suffering Feelings into Compassion for Others

This meditation helps us become more conscious of layers of struggle, stress and suffering in ourselves that others also experience in their own ways, as a basis of empathy and compassion for them. To prepare for this, you need first to recall your field of care, to access the secure core of love and compassion that is needed to feel safe to explore your feelings. After that, you bring to mind a difficult feeling that is familiar to you, which many others also experience in their own ways. Below is a sample list of difficult situations and associated feelings. Please examine the list and select one feeling to explore in the meditation below. As you do the meditation repeatedly over time, you can explore many such feelings, and let repeated practice evoke your own personal list of further feelings to explore.

--Become conscious of a feeling of physical pain anywhere, or of anxiety that you feel about your body or your health, or any fears you have of severe illness or injury.

--Recall a feeling of not being seen, of being looked down upon, or of humiliation.

--Recall a feeling of strong anger from being betrayed or hurt by what someone did.

--Bring to mind a feeling you have of failure, hopelessness, or despair.

--Recall a feeling of intense longing, loneliness, or feeling abandoned.

--Bring to mind any fear you have about supporting yourself or your loved ones, or of meeting all of your obligations or debts.

--Bring to mind any grief you feel at the loss of a relationship, a job, or a way of life.

--Recall any grief you feel from the loss of a loved one who has died.

--Recall any fear you have for a loved one now alive, in their vulnerability and mortality.

--Bring to mind any fears you feel at your own impending death.

If you have difficulty at any stage of this meditation, you can settle back into your field of care, let the feeling of difficulty be embraced in its loving qualities, and just rest there. Then return to any stage of this meditation when you feel ready.

MEDITATION : TAKING OUR OWN SUFFERING FEELINGS INTO COMPASSION FOR OTHERS

-1) Abdominal breathing: Sit in a relaxed way, with back comfortably straight, eyes gazing gently downward. Come down from the thinking mind into the body. Let the breath settle into its own natural rhythm while breathing into the abdomen so you feel it expand on each inhale. Feel the abdomen expanding and contracting with each breath. Let that feeling draw you into it more and more, breath by breath.

-2) Reconnecting with love and compassion: Now bring to mind your field of care as present here with you now. You are being seen as deeply worthy of love and care, beyond judgments. Relax into the felt sense of this experience, steeping in its loving energy and tender qualities, and letting them infuse your whole being. Accept this loving energy and its qualities into your whole body and heart and mind—every part of you loved in its very being.

-3) Experiencing a suffering feeling as a doorway to empathy: Now, while continuing to feel the resonance of that loving holding environment, bring to mind the feeling you selected for this meditation. Take some time to sense what it's like for someone to experience that feeling, through your own experience of it (pausing after each question to explore): How does it feel in your heart and mind? How does it feel in the body? What other feelings come up in association with this feeling? How does the whole world look and feel from within this feeling?

Many other people experience feelings like this in their own ways. So now sense right through your feeling what others feel. Feel, through your feeling, what they feel. In this way, sense this feeling as not just your own, but as your deep connection to many others.

-4) Receiving compassion for all: After exploring in that way for a little while, recall that your whole being is held in the unconditional love and compassion of your field of care, and let all of your feelings be embraced in this compassionate energy, every part of you loved in its very being. By accepting this loving energy into your own suffering feelings, imagine you are accepting it into everyone who has similar feelings, by letting the radiance of this energy extend through you to them all, while wishing them deeply well and free of suffering. Imagine they are becoming free of the suffering and deeply well, and let yourself take joy in their relief and joy.

-5) Releasing: Now, let this field of loving spaciousness and acceptance help your mind to relax, settle back a bit inwardly, release all its frameworks of worry and concern, and become naturally wide open like space. Whatever thoughts and feelings arise, just let them unwind and release within this sky-like openness of awareness, by letting everything be.

Processing the Meditation: Often our experience of suffering makes us feel terribly isolated from others in our own pain. With this meditation, **we learn to experience our own painful feelings not as isolating us from others but as *connecting us to them***—as compassionate solidarity with others. People all over the world experience hidden layers of suffering like the feelings listed above, though they do so in their own ways in their contexts and cultures. This meditation prepares us for meditation 8, in which we sense all those around us as harboring hidden layers of suffering, just as we do, which empowers deepening compassion for all of us.

We get **overwhelmed by suffering when it feels like it comprises our whole reality**. **This practice prevents that, by helping us experience suffering feelings as encompassed in a larger awareness** of compassionate openness, deep acceptance and warmth, where such feelings can heal, transform and release.