

## Compassionate Meditation Introduction

Compassion based meditation can be a useful practice for us to become more tolerant, forgiving and understanding as human beings. Our ability to be empathic towards other people increases the more we practice compassion, as well as our desire to relieve the suffering of others.

There is much research to suggest that meditating about other people's suffering can help to put our own distress into perspective, however learning compassion for oneself is the first step. In order to be compassionate towards other human beings, we must first learn the skill of self-compassion. Cultivating compassion can be a source of peace and harmony for both our mind and body.

As you begin, the focus will be on developing compassion towards yourself. You will be guided with phrase terms that you can use to apply, along with the option of creating your own terms. You will simply be asked to repeat these phrases to yourself, even if at first you have difficulty believing the phrase. You will be encouraged to try a few phrases, until you find some that you connect with and feel comfortable with.

Compassion can take some time to develop so it is important to practice.

## Compassionate Meditation Guided Audio

Compassion can be practiced in any posture such as reclining, sitting, or standing, although sitting is often the preferred choice. Find yourself a comfortable position, a space that you can be undisturbed in for the next few quiet minutes. Begin to relax and gently allow your eyes to close or focus on a spot in front of you.

First, take some time to bring to mind a time when you have suffered. Allow yourself to think about a time when you were either unwell.... in pain.... having an argument with someone...or a time in which you felt uncomfortable.

Notice how you are currently feeling now that you have allowed yourself to connect in with these feelings of suffering. Bring mindful awareness to any sensations or emotions that have arisen for you. Observe if you feel any sensations in your body. Pay attention to the characteristics of these sensations. Notice if you feel agitation, tightness, tingling, aching.

We do not like to observe our loved ones suffering, neither do we like to feel suffering ourselves. You may have already noticed a strong desire to want to avoid these unpleasant sensations and to disconnect from the pain and memory of suffering.

Allow yourself to stay as connected as you can with this suffering. Take some time to breathe into the suffering, to the sensations it creates in your body. See if you can make some room around the unpleasant sensations, to give some space to them. Focus on your breathing as you do this.

Next, I invite you to bring to mind the following phrases as you wish for yourself to be free from suffering:

“May I be free from suffering”

“May I feel peace”

Gently repeat these phrases to yourself, quietly.... “May I be free from suffering...may I feel peace”.

These phrases are just suggestions. You may like to try out your own phrase, take the next few quiet moments to try this.

Now, take some time to again notice how you are now feeling. Connect in with how your body feels. Do you notice any sensations in the body? Pay attention to the characteristics of these sensations. Do you feel warmth? Peace? Happiness? Openness? Observe where you feel these sensations in your body. Do you notice any changes from when you were visualising suffering? What do you notice?

Next, turn your attention to a loved one. Try to bring to mind a time when your loved one was suffering or experiencing some sort of pain. Perhaps your loved one was experiencing physical pain.... a broken heart.... a disappointment. Notice how you feel when you think about this person suffering. Allow yourself to observe any sensations that arise for you. Notice where in your body you feel these sensations and their characteristics. Do you feel warmth or aching? Do you feel hot or cold?

Again, try not to avoid thinking about your loved one suffering. Allow yourself to continue to connect in with this, as you focus on your breathing.

Next, I invite you to bring to mind the following phrases as you wish for your loved one to be free from suffering:

“May they be free from suffering”

“May they feel peace”

Gently repeat these phrases to yourself, quietly.... “May they be free from suffering...may they feel peace”.

Feel free to try out your own phrases, perhaps something that allows you to feel more compassion. Take the next few quiet moments to try this.

Take some time to again notice how you are now feeling. Connect in with how your body feels. Do you notice any sensations in the body? Pay attention to the characteristics of these sensations. Do you feel warmth? Peace? Happiness? Openness? Observe where you feel these sensations in your body. Do you notice any changes from when you were visualising suffering? What do you notice?

Shortly we will be finishing our practice. If you have had your eyes closed I invite you to now open your eyes and connect back to the space around you. Try to take some of this compassion that you are developing for yourself and others with you.