

LOVINGKINDNESS MEDITATION

Imagine yourself in a situation where you are thoroughly loved or loving. It may be in the arms of a loved one or in the eyes of a close friend. Recreate in your mind all sensations associated with this loving situation—a warm heart, a feeling of safety, relaxation, etc. While immersed in this feeling, say to yourself:

May I be filled with lovingkindness

May I be well

May I be peaceful and at ease

May I be happy

May I be free

Add other well wishes that are particularly comforting you given the nature of your life and the kinds of issues you struggle with that prevent you from feeling happy and free. The feeling of care toward yourself is more important than the actual words used.

Once you have directed lovingness toward yourself, you can expand it and extend it to others as you wish. The traditional sequence is to next direct it toward loved ones, an acquaintance or neutral person, an enemy, and then all beings. You may choose to follow this sequence or to follow a sequence of your own choosing. Lovingkindness toward yourself is the most important practice of all.

COMPASSION PRACTICE-- Tonglen

“*Tonglen* is a Tibetan word that literally means ‘sending and taking.’ The practice originated in India and came to Tibet in the eleventh century. In tonglen practice, when we see or feel suffering, we breathe in with the notion of completely feeling it, accepting it, and owning it. Then we breathe out, radiating compassion, lovingkindness, freshness; anything that encourages relaxation and openness.” From *When Things Fall Apart: Heart Advice for Difficult Times* by Pema Chodron.

Bring to mind a problem you have been having lately that has caused you suffering. On the inhale, become aware of the suffering this problem is causing you. On the exhale, send out compassion to yourself for the pain you are feeling.

Next, on your inhale, become aware of the suffering of all other people in the world who have this same problem, and on the exhale send out your compassion to all of these people with the same problem.

Bring to mind another problem you are having and do the same exercise.

Next, become aware of all the suffering in the world on your inhale, and send out compassion for all sufferers on the exhale.

