

Guided Meditation: Uncomplicated Compassion

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Hello everyone, and welcome to our meditation on compassion. In doing the actual meditation, *karuṇā* meditation, it's helpful to have this idea that during the meditation, we don't actually have to go out and help anyone or do anything. What we're tapping into is the simplicity of our human capacity for compassionate care, compassionate resonance with someone, where somehow we're touched, we care, we somehow feel attuned with something and someone else, some suffering. There can be a very human and very simple response within that is there before any judgments or shoulds or conceits or "I have to, I'm supposed to." A very simple response of compassion that is not connected to fear or alarm, any connection to stories and imagination of what could happen. It's a very simple response.

And to learn how to rest in the simplicity of compassion, reserving action and more active consideration of what needs to be done and how to respond for another time, maybe at a time when we kind of know how to be with compassion in a more grounded and full way. For the meditation, it's meant to touch into something that's very healthy inside of ourselves, something that's simple in and of itself, a simple kind of sense of care, warmth. Of course we want to help, but now we want to just be able to rest and let this attunement to others' sufferings, the capacity to feel this simple, warm-hearted compassion, to allow it to grow in us in an uncomplicated way, to know what it's like to have it in an uncomplicated way. Too often, I believe, compassion is complicated by so many different factors that are not inherent in compassion, but added into it. To take time to discover the simplicity of this very simple, maybe even considered ordinary, desire to support people, to want their suffering to go away, to care.

Because in us there's a sweet goodness, there's a reservoir of a certain kind of kindness or care that is different than loving-kindness. But it's a kind of shared humanity, empathy, a kind

of activation of a warm-hearted wish for others to be well that brings a kind of satisfaction or joy that this comes out of us, this lives in us. Sometimes it can live in us independent of the contact with someone who's suffering. Sometimes, as the mind gets quieter and quieter in meditation, something of what's kind of left is this vibration or this resonance, this glow of a warm-hearted compassion that's just simply there. It doesn't have to have an object. It's just a reservoir of goodness that is just there.

So for this meditation, we'll try to kind of aim at this, the simplicity of uncomplicated compassion. And we'll do this in coordination with breathing. I'm very fond of practicing breath meditation, teaching it as a foundation and as a support for so much. And hopefully this will work for you. And at some point I'll ask you to think about someone who, or something in the world for whom, you can have an uncomplicated, simple compassion. It might be clearly that this is not the time and place to fix the problem, to respond to it.

This is meditation time. It's not the time to be involved in stories and imagination about what could happen. This is meditation time. But to just evoke this person or this event or this thing, just enough, a simple place, a simple person, a friend, someone who's easy, who you would have compassion for if they were somehow suffering, or maybe they are in some light way and they'll manage fine on their own, but you still care for them. So something light. That's all I'll ask at some point.

So to assume a meditation posture, gently close your eyes and, as much as you can, from the inside out, feel your body breathing. Feel the movements of your chest, of your belly. And as you exhale, relax and soften in your body. And as you breathe in, see if you can follow the expansion of your chest, your belly, your shoulders, your back rib cage in a way that broadens your attention, broadens your panoramic view, the body breathing in, the body breathing out. As you exhale, letting the whole torso settle, quiet, soften.

And doing the same now to breathing in, and expanding the panoramic view to include the thinking mind, not focusing on it directly, but as the attention expands with the inhale, part of it touches into the thinking mind. And as you exhale, quieting the thinking mind. And as you're sitting here, is there any place in your body, in your chest, your heart, your belly, anywhere at all, that you associate with compassion? The place where compassion arises from, the place in the body that seems most activated, alive, when there's compassion, can be anywhere at all in the body or the whole body. And as you breathe in, as if the breath can fill that space, that place, touch into the place where compassion begins, where it lives, where it's most present in your body.

This simple compassion that for now doesn't need to be concerned with doing anything or

projecting into the future what might happen. Just this very simple ordinary warmth, glow of compassion, and feeling that as you breathe in. And as you exhale, let there be a softening, a relaxing, a settling into the center of compassion. And if you want, you can bring to mind a person or an event that's simple and uncomplicated, where you have some deeper resonance of compassion, care for this person or event, people. You're fine for now not to have to act or make decisions, have judgments. You're fine not thinking about it or thinking ahead.

Very simple thinking of this person to see how it might bring alive an uncomplicated compassion, and breathing in, feeling this compassion as simply as possible. And as you exhale, relaxing this place of compassion, softening, settling, breathing in and feeling the reservoir of compassion. And if there is none, either imagine there is, or have the wish that there is. Both of them, not wishful thinking, but a wholesome motivation. So you can feel the wholesomeness, the goodness of simple compassion, simple wanting it, imagining it, breathing in, feeling it, breathing out, settling and relaxing into it.

If there's suffering in the world that you know of, that's simple, maybe ordinary, doesn't require anything from you, maybe it's a compassion for someone who can manage fine with their suffering, but you still feel an aliveness, a glow, a tenderness of compassion within. See how simple you can feel it within yourself. And as you breathe in, letting it grow and expand through you in very small increments, faintly, quietly. And as you exhale, a settling, relaxing into that compassion, to the heart of it. Breathing in, letting your compassion expand through your body, grow.

And as you exhale now, imagine that you're opening your body wide. So your compassion is a welcoming, receptive place to receive whatever suffering there is in the world, to receive it in an uncomplicated way, into a place of relaxed care, goodwill, tenderness, and gentleness of sweet compassion. And as we come to the end of this sitting, with your heart, your body, your compassion open to the suffering of the world, staying still with an uncomplicated, simple compassion, bring to mind or bring to heart the idea of wishing the world were free of compassion, free of suffering. Wishing for the end of suffering, wherever it is, whatever form comes to you, lands in your soft compassion. May you be at ease.

Being present for suffering, wishing the suffering to end, may all distress unwind and disappear. May all anxiety be reassured and be settled and quieted. May all hostilities that people live with or experience, may it melt and dissolve into friendliness and goodwill. May whatever suffering there is in the world, may it be alleviated by calling forth all

the goodness that is found in this world. May all the collective goodness of all of us work together for the welfare and benefits of all beings. May all beings be free of suffering.

Thank you.