

## Guided Meditation: Undivided Compassion

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Welcome. Welcome to this morning meditation here at *Insight Meditation Center*. And the topic for this week is *Compassion Samādhi*. *Samādhi* being a state of meditation where we're undivided, where all of who we are gets brought together around or centered on a particular area of focus.

And images matter. I think that metaphors and images can help us understand or give us a different entryway for *samādhi*. And the one I'd like to offer is to think of *samādhi* as a big receptacle, like a big bowl, into which a lot of things will gather into the bowl, gather around it, into the receptacle. But none of it is at the center. The center of the receptacle is the subject of the meditation process. And that subject is big enough, wide enough, to receive everything else into it, around it, just circling it, coming in close, or just settling into the bowl, maybe like a bowl with a little hill in the middle, and everything gathers around it.

So when it's compassion *samādhi*, compassion is the receptacle. Compassion is there to receive everything. And if everything kind of settles around that central stability, that central place of compassion. It's kind of like the story I like to tell of my son in preschool, when the kids were running around playing and it was time for something else to happen. The teacher would stand calmly in the middle of the classroom and start speaking in a very low voice. And I think the kids understood that a story was going to be told or something wonderful was going to happen.

And the kids, when they noticed that, would come and sit down around the teacher. And within a minute or two, the whole class of 20 or 30 kids would be gathered around this particular teacher, quiet and calm. And to manage to get all these chaotic, excited kids running around screaming so quickly to settle was quite a remarkable thing. They gathered, they became unified, and they were paying attention. And so *samādhi* is that gathering in, like everything else sits and is around, calmly, around the center. And the center is compassion.

And the contrast to that, for the purposes of this teaching, is either the suffering that we're encountering in the world or in ourselves, that we make that the center, that somehow we have that be where we take a stand, where we live, and that's the receptacle for everything else. And that creates a very different ambience or context for meditation than if compassion is the center and suffering is part of what gathers around it, is held by it. And that can be our own suffering, the suffering of others, or both. And so this idea that there's a receptacle for it all, compassion that receives suffering. And in *samādhi*, it's all it does.

It doesn't involve actively needing to think about it, solve it, figure out what to do. It doesn't have to be that suffering is a catalyst for feeling despair or fear. Those things can happen, of course, but they're all gathered together in the quietly speaking compassion in the middle. And everything comes together to sit there quietly, to listen to the compassion story. And so the idea here is to find some way to let compassion be at the center, the receptacle.

And one way to do that is to have some kind of feeling, emotional feeling, sensations that we associate with compassion: a softness, a warmth, a tingling, a vibration, a goodness, a sweetness, somewhere within. That the breathing breathes through, breathes with. So that feeling of compassion is at the center. And everything is invited to come and be there next to it, around it. Nothing's excluded. Everything resolves itself around it, settles itself, works itself out around it.

The focal point for compassion might be the intention, the wish, that others not suffer. And that beautiful wish, may I not suffer, may others not suffer, that can waft up. That can be very gentle. It can be very light. That also can be a sweet or inspiring kind of voice or feeling of intentionality. May people not suffer. And that becomes a center. It's like the teacher in the preschool who would quietly speak.

So there's a quiet voice or image or feeling, intention, that is quietly and lovingly spoken. That is a center that everything else gathers around. It might be an image, an image of someone suffering, that our compassion and goodwill easily arise for without despairing, without being horrified, without being troubled by it, without feeling we have to rush off to save. Just a very simple image that brings forth. Don't choose something which is difficult as an image. Choose something that's actually very easy.

And then establishing on that center of compassion, breathing with it, breathing through it, feeling it. Then let everything else that arises gather around it, be received by compassion. So that compassion is not the forward point of going out and asserting ourselves into the world. Compassion is the open field into which everything is received. So everything can settle. Everything can calm in meditation.

And so we're willing in meditation to understand this is not the time to fix problems. That comes later. So to assume a meditation posture, a posture that somehow allows maybe your whole being to be a receptacle, to receive all your experience. A posture where your chest is a little open. A posture where maybe the weight of your torso and body is balanced on your spine, coming to rest in your sitting bones, if you're sitting.

Gently closing your eyes and gently, quietly, like the teacher in that preschool, gently take some larger breaths, just enough to feel connected more to breathing, and a little longer exhale, just enough to enjoy relaxing, softening, letting your breathing return to normal. And as you inhale, feel anywhere where you might be excessively activated, energized, tense, emotionally, physically, mentally. And as you exhale, relax that part of your body as if you're inviting how you feel to be received in the receptacle of the body that can hold it. And then to feel or find a way to feel compassion, loving care for the suffering of yourself and others.

Looking for that simple place within where compassion is untroubled by its care for suffering. Almost the simple center of it all. For now, being willing to be very simple. Maybe with an image that evokes compassion, thinking of a person or an event that evokes compassion, that evokes an easy compassion, simple compassion. Maybe a place in your body that's associated with the warmth or the glow of compassion.

And as you inhale, connect to this compassion, this warmth, however small it is. And if all it is is a wish to be compassionate, that's pretty special in itself. That's enough for the *samādhi*. If you stay close to that wish, breathing into it, feeling it, connecting to it, and exhaling, relaxing, settling around the compassion, into the compassion. Imagining you're a large receptacle with compassion at the middle, a compassion which invites every part of who you are to come and join it in the middle.

Rather than letting go of things and letting them drift away, take them and let them let go into the compassion. Release into the compassion everything: your thoughts, your distractions, your feelings. Maybe with every exhale, let all things settle into the area of the compassion, joining so that you become undivided in yourself. Everything is unified. Everything is unified around the core of care and compassion, with breathing being the unifier of it all, with a central focus of intention on compassion, and everything else is in the peripheral awareness around this warm, stable, inviting compassion, a compassion which has room for everything.

Breathing through the compassion. And with every exhale, invite everything about you, everything that's happening, to come and sit quietly around the compassion in this great big receptacle of a heart which is big enough to hold the whole world. And as we come to the

end of this sitting, to again, or continue to, connect to the place of compassion within, maybe with a simple wish: May I have compassion for whatever suffering is encountered. May there be care, kindness, with a connection to a simple compassion that brings you some delight or joy, even gratitude, that we have the capacity to receive the suffering of the world in this receptacle of compassion.

Gratitude, joy, and appreciation for what a wonderful gift it is to meet the suffering of the world with an undivided compassionate care. That's not divided by fear, anxiety, despair, preoccupation. May we, with a wide-open receptive compassion, wish this world well. May all beings be free of suffering. May all beings know that there is care and compassion in this world for their plight.

May all beings be free of hunger and free of war, free of poverty and violence. May all beings be free of distress. And may we, at least in ourselves, be able to hold the suffering of others without suffering more. May all beings be happy. May all beings be free. Thank you.