

## Guided Meditation: Liberated Compassion

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Hello and welcome. Warm greetings from IMC. And we're here for the guided meditation on compassion.

Compassion is one of the very profound and meaningful emotions and motivations a person can have. And it's one of the great central orientations for a life that can give life tremendous meaning and purpose, but also can be the byproduct of becoming free of reactivity, attachments, clinging, hatred, which is a deep work of Buddhist practice. The deep work of really delving deeply into our inner life to release the places of reactivity, the places of holding, the places of resistance, all the places that limit the heart's capacity to love freely, openly, without expectations, without exchange, without needing to have it returned, just because it's the nature of the inner life, the heart, to love. And that the inner life, in a sense, needs to love more than it needs to be loved. And that difference is realized, the greater, the deeper the inner freedom is, the sense of ease, deep ease.

So in Buddhism, there's a very strong connection between liberation and compassion, that liberation creates the opening, creates the space, in the inner life, for compassion to be fully operating, to be operating without any obstructions. It's one of the beautiful treasures of liberation. And for this meditation, I'd like to use the word, as a synonym for liberation, I'd like to use the word ease. Profound sense of ease. Yes, when all reactivity is put to rest.

A profound sense of ease, when we're not compulsively activated by desires and aversions, not compulsively preoccupied with identity, self, ideas of who we are and how we're seen, caught up in thoughts of me, myself, and mine. To have a deep sense of ease where all those things kind of melt away, even temporarily. And in that ease, to discover compassion. And to discover that compassion operates cleanest and most fully when there is no reactivity.

Some people will think that then there's a lack of reactivity as an indifference or as a numbness, a disconnection, unfeeling. Lack of reactivity is a betrayal of needing to show that we really care and we're being responsible, we're engaged. The opposite is the case. The absence of reactivity, the ability to rest in deep ease, allows for our responses to the world to come from a deeper place or fuller place and a more beneficial place, when we realize that how we are sometimes is more important for the world than what we do.

We might give some money to a hungry person on the street who's asking for money for a meal, and that might feel good. We do it out of compassion, but also out of distance, not getting too close, not being so safe, maybe feeling a little bit disturbed by this person because of their dirt or their poverty or their lack of teeth or something. But with ease, when we have a sense of ease with everyone we encounter, a sense of freedom, with everyone we encounter, we might stop and say hello. We might ask how they're doing. We might look them in the eye and appreciate them or see them clearly for what they are. Then we might give them some food or money.

And it turns out that they have a greater need to be seen as a human being with care and love than they have for money. So, sometimes how we are is more important than what we do. And that's what we're learning to do here.

So, to assume a meditation posture, and gently close your eyes, and become attuned, aligned in harmony with the rhythm of breathing in and breathing out. No need to breathe any special way. And as you breathe, as you exhale, set your body at ease, maybe through relaxing the different muscles that are tense. Setting your body at ease with a global relaxation of any ways in which you're braced against life. Easing up on the body. Easing up with the challenges of your body. Be easy. See if there can be an ease or an easiness with whatever way your body is.

Amen. Set yourself at ease emotionally. Let your heart be at ease. Maybe relaxing as you exhale. Setting your heart at ease. And if there's some way that you feel emotionally challenged, it's okay. See if you can, if you can ease up on it. Be easy with how you're feeling and be at ease with your body in the middle of it, and setting your mind at ease.

Maybe on the exhale, relaxing your thinking mind, experimenting with quieting your thoughts, slowing down and gentling the images you have in the mind. Easing up in any challenging thoughts and ideas that you're involved in. Being at ease with how your mind is, maybe by breathing with and through the mind as a gentle, cool breeze that cools, calms the thinking mind. And then being at ease with your breathing. Easing up. If your breathing is challenging, be easy with that. Easing up any attitudes or resistance or struggle.

And with whatever sense of ease you have, in the places of ease, see if you can connect to compassion, a place where you feel compassion, a place where you feel a tender care, and bring to mind someone, yourself, someone else, who it's easy and easeful to have compassion for. Their suffering, their challenge is not difficult for you, but you do have compassion, you do have care, you do want the best for them. And find that place of compassion, that motivation of compassion, thoughts of compassion, and let the compassion that you have flow through and with any sense of ease you have. So the compassion is not compromised by any reactivity or judgments or fears or contraction.

Maybe with breathing, the rhythm of breathing, giving voice to the compassion with the words, may you be free of suffering, or if it's your own suffering, may I be free of suffering. But where the voice that says this has an ease to it, easing up, where the image of compassion, the feeling of it, the sense of it within, it's like the center of a big receptacle that you breathe with, breathe through, welcoming suffering to come and sit quietly around the center of compassion. Your ease, your freedom offers a generous welcome for suffering to come and sit close, to be held safely, caringly in your own heart.

If you have any reactivity, preoccupation, distracted thoughts, tensions you carry, can you for a few moments relax them, settle them, trusting that compassion is the better option? Sit with compassion, with compassion at the center of all things, and breathing the weaver that weaves yourself, you and everything else, into and with that compassion.

When there's a deep sense of ease, a deep sense of freedom in the heart, compassion is easy. As a naturalness, it's not force, it's not held back, it's not doubted, it's as if freedom has been given its freedom, as if compassion is given its freedom to be fully itself in the fullness in which we inhabit the receptacle of compassion.

And as we come to the end of the sitting, once again, set yourself at ease. Be easy with how things are. Easing up. Being easy with the suffering that we encounter. Being easy with the compassion that arises and gazing outwards onto the world. A calm gaze, be at ease, and gaze upon the world compassionately.

May all beings be free of suffering. May all beings be free of distress, free of anxiety, free of the pain of having hatred. May all beings be happy. And may we all contribute to the welfare and happiness of this world, from a place of deep ease, trusting that how we are is often more important than what we do. And the very best is when how we are and what we do are in harmony, offering the best we have to support this suffering world. Thank you.