

## Compassion Practices from April 24 Dharma talk by Jeffrey Fracher

- *May you be held in compassion.*
- To cultivate compassion, let yourself sit in a centered and quiet way. In this traditional form of practice you will combine a repeated inner intention with visualization and the evocation of the feeling of compassion. As you first sit, breathe softly and feel your body, your heartbeat, the life within you. Feel how you treasure your own life, how you guard yourself in the face of your sorrows.
- After some time, bring to mind someone close to you whom you dearly love. Picture them and feel your natural caring for them. Notice how you hold them in your heart. Then let yourself be aware of their measure of sorrows, their suffering in life. Feel how your heart opens to wish them well, to extend comfort, to share in their pain and meet it with compassion. This is the natural response of the heart. Inwardly recite the phrases:
- *May you be held in compassion.*  
*May your pain and sorrow be eased.*  
*May your heart be at peace.*
- Continue reciting all the while you are holding them in your heart. You can modify these phrases any way that makes them true to your heart's intention.
- After a few minutes, imagine that they turn their compassionate gaze back to you and acknowledge the measure of sorrows you carry. They say to you with tenderness the same phrases:
- *May you be held in compassion.*  
*May your pain and sorrow be eased.*  
*May you be at peace.*
- Take in these compassionate wishes and let them touch your heart. After a time receiving their care, direct the same compassion to yourself.
- *May I be held in compassion.*  
*May my pain and sorrow be eased.*  
*May I be at peace.*
- Following this, begin to extend compassion to others you know. Picture loved ones, one after another. Hold the image of each in your heart, be aware of their difficulties, and wish them well with the same phrases.

- Then you can open your compassion further, a step at a time, to the suffering of your friends, to your neighbors, to your community, to all who suffer, to difficult people, to your enemies, and finally to the brotherhood and sisterhood of all beings. Sense your tenderhearted connection with all life and its creatures.
  - Work with compassion practice intuitively. At times it may feel difficult, as though we might be overwhelmed by the pain. Remember, we are not trying to “fix” the pain of the world, only to meet it with a compassionate heart. Relax and be gentle. Breathe. Let your breath and heart rest naturally, as a center of compassion in the midst of the world.
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- **Compassion without Boundaries** from Christina Feldman,
  - "Settle into a calm and centered posture. Breathe gently and sense the life of your body, mind, and heart in this moment. Sense your own yearning for peace, safety, and well-being. Notice how your heart can open to embrace those you care for, feeling their sorrow and responding with a natural compassion. Offer to yourself, to the one you love, the articulated intentions of compassion.
  - "May I find healing and peace."  
"May you find healing and peace."
  - "Let your attention rest gently in these phrases for a time, and then allow the range of your attention and compassion to expand. Sense the countless beings in this world who in this moment have their own measure of anguish, their own longings for peace and healing. Imagine yourself seated in the center of a mandala, surrounded by the innumerable beings who at this moment are hungry, bereft, afraid, or in pain. Imagine yourself breathing in that immeasurable pain, the sorrow and the ignorance that causes sorrow. With each out breath, sense yourself breathing out unconditional compassion.
  - "May all beings find healing.  
"May all beings find peace.  
"May all beings be held in compassion.
  - "Allow yourself to sense the countless beings in the world who are ill or dying, who are grieving, who are lonely and estranged. Embrace in your attention those who are imprisoned and those who imprison, those who

are caught in the terrors of war and violence and those who war and inflict violence. Without reservation enfold all beings in a heart of compassion.

- "May all beings be free from sorrow.  
"May all beings be free from suffering.  
"May all beings be free.
- "Let your heart fill with the compassion possible for all of us, the compassion that listens deeply to the cries of the world."