

**Cognitively-Based Compassion Training**  
**Manual**

**(draft, January 2013)**

## Preface

In 2005, after a number of years of discussion and preparation, Emory University launched an interdisciplinary pilot project to test the psychological and physiological effects of compassion meditation in college undergraduates. This project came to be known as Compassion Meditation as a Strategy for Reducing Depressive Symptoms in College Freshmen, with Charles L. Raison, M.D. acting as the principal scientific investigator and myself as the principal contemplative investigator. This research eventually spanned five semesters and formed the nexus of a larger program of investigation into clinical and therapeutic applications of contemplative practices.

The choice of the compassion meditation technique, as opposed to practices that are more commonly studied – such as mindfulness or Transcendental Meditation™ -- was deliberate. In the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, compassion meditation practice requires practitioners to actively work with their emotions in order to develop a deep feeling of affection for others. This creates strong feelings of positive connection with other people, and research has now shown that social connectivity has a protective effect against a wide range of factors that contribute to deleterious psycho-social impacts, including stress, depression and PTSD (see, for example J.T. Cacioppo 2006 and 2008). Within the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, compassion practice is considered to confer immeasurable benefits to the individual and to society; some researchers, including our own team, are beginning to record a number of the measurable effects of the practice on the body and the mind.

The Tibetan *lojong* tradition, as the name denotes, is a system of mind training. It presents cognitive, analytical techniques that, when practiced sincerely, will enable an individual to reframe relationships with others. The degree to which a person is able to transform relationships through this process is dependent on the degree to which that person is able to relate to others with affection, which engenders deep feelings of endearment and tenderness towards others. We are using affection to translate the Tibetan word *vid-'ong*, which conveys the sense of someone who is cherished and pleasing to the mind. Affection is the catalyst that activates empathy to spark the development of compassion. Developing a sense of affection is thus crucial to the process, and the tradition presents guided steps for its successful cultivation. Different approaches for cultivating affection are described in various lineages of the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, each lineage providing robust pedagogical and experiential training tools. I chose the materials for this project from the lineages that would be appropriate for a secular research context; some strands of reasoning for developing compassion rely heavily on the Buddhist philosophical doctrine of reincarnation, and thus could not be incorporated here.

The compassion meditation protocol presented here is grounded in ancient Tibetan Buddhist tradition, but has been modified to render it completely secular, without relying on any particular religious doctrine or beliefs. Still, it speaks to universal themes inherent in all major religious and humanistic traditions while remaining faithful to the empirical and experiential spirit of Tibetan Buddhism.

The protocol as offered here has been revised to incorporate feedback from participants and lessons we have learned from teaching it over five semesters at Emory. It now forms the basis for our ongoing research, as well as for several clinical interventions that are being implemented by our team among various populations in Atlanta.

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## 1. Introduction

*What is compassion and why do we need it?*

At its most fundamental level, compassion is the wish to alleviate the suffering of another.

Compassion is a basic human value, necessary for our survival as individuals and as communities. It is recognized by all major spiritual traditions, and is indeed elevated as a highest ideal by them. Modern science is also increasingly recognizing the importance of compassion for our health and the flourishing of our species. Charles Darwin, who is more frequently associated with ideas like “survival of the fittest,” in reality described sympathy (the word he used instead of compassion, but with a similar meaning) as the strongest of human instincts, essential for our survival, and the foundation of our ethical systems.

Compassion is recognized as a desirable and beneficial trait in all major religious traditions and in most secular contexts. Impartial compassion for all beings is a quintessential feature of Tibetan Buddhist practice, thus the tradition presents extensive and systematic approaches for cultivating and developing compassion. It is believed that the potential to develop compassion exists in every person, and that it is a quality that can be deliberately expanded and deepened through training. The systematic pursuit of compassion has been the goal of an unusually large number of Tibetan contemplatives for over a thousand years, and to this day it remains a vibrant and integral practice for followers of Tibetan Buddhism.

If we understand love as the wish for another to have happiness, then we see that compassion and love are two sides of the same coin. When we feel close to others, we want them to have happiness and to be free from suffering: that is love and compassion.

*What are the origins of CBCT?*

During the 2003-2004 academic year at Emory University, increasing signs of mental distress among undergraduates, including several suicides, prompted Emory student Molly Harrington to ask whether there were resources available to help young people deal with stress and depression. Based on her appeal, Geshe Lobsang Negi developed CBCT, a model for a secular compassion meditation practice drawn from the vast, varied Tibetan Buddhist tradition. In 2005 the Emory-Tibet Partnership and the Emory Mind-Body Program forged an innovative study to examine the impact of compassion meditation in treating depression among undergraduates.

The results of the study showed an unequivocal correlation between the practice of compassion meditation and the prevention and reduction of depression levels in students (Pace et al. 2008, Pace et al. 2009). The promising results of this project encouraged us to explore means of adapting and delivering CBCT to a variety of other populations. We are currently conducting an NIH-funded follow-up study evaluating the efficacy of

CBCT compared to both an attentional training intervention and health education group in healthy adults.

In addition to employing CBCT as a means of reducing stress and enhancing immune function, we have begun to conceive of ways in which CBCT could promote prosociality and mental flourishing, and ameliorate or protect against the effects of trauma. Members of our team adapted the CBCT program for use with elementary school children (ages 5-9), and are currently evaluating the effects of this program on prosocial behavior, bullying, social exclusion, stereotyping and bias. The preliminary pilot study with these young children is described in Ozawa-de Silva and Dodson-Lavelle (2011).

In 2008, we piloted a CBCT program for adolescent girls in foster care (ages 13-16). This particular adaptation was designed to help girls develop inner resilience and build stronger healthier relationships. The success of this pilot program, described in Ozawa-de Silva and Dodson-Lavelle (2011), has led to on-going studies investigating the effects of compassion training in this population. In 2010 the Georgia Department of Health and Human Services and the Center for Disease Control in Atlanta, GA funded a randomized, wait-list control trial of CBCT for seventy-two foster children. This study examined the efficacy of this training for reducing emotional reactivity, psycho-social stress, and behavioral problems. Though CBCT was not designed to treat trauma specifically, we believe the training offers practitioners a set of strategies and skills that may buffer against future traumas and lessen the impact of traumatic memories or triggers and promote resilience. Members of our research team are also investigating the efficacy of CBCT among suicide-attempters at a local hospital in Atlanta.

### *Can compassion be trained?*

Primatologist Frans de Waal explains that all human beings share a common foundation of a biologically-based compassion. This biologically-based compassion is limited and only extends to those close to us. As human beings, however, we can extend compassion beyond the few nearest to us, to embrace larger groups. This second level of compassion is a deliberately trainable skill, yet such compassion will only arise if there is a sense of endearment towards others. If that sense of endearment can be cultivated towards larger sections of humanity, so can compassion.

The actual conditions of our existence are such that we exist interdependently with others. Everything we need for our survival comes from the efforts of countless others, almost all of whom are personally unknown to us. Recognizing this often-neglected fact enables us to feel endearment and gratitude towards others. Such a recognition needs to be deepened through training and practice, otherwise it remains only a superficial thought. When it does become a deep realization, it changes the way we behave and relate towards others.

This model—that a change in our view will change our behavior once it becomes deeply engrained through training and practice—is called *lta-spyod-sgom-gsum* in Tibetan, which literally means “view, behavior, and meditation.” Spiritual traditions across the world acknowledge that a compassion that embraces others beyond one’s immediate friends and

family can indeed be cultivated, but that it does not come easy. Deep thinkers in the sciences, such as Albert Einstein and Charles Darwin, have come to the same conclusion. Darwin wrote in *The Descent of Man*, “As man advances in civilization, and small tribes are united into larger communities, the simplest reason will tell each individual that he ought to extend his social instincts and sympathies to all the members of the same nation, though personally unknown to him. This point being, once reached, there is only an artificial barrier to prevent his sympathies extending to the men of all nations and races... Sympathy beyond the confines of man, that is, humanity to lower animals, seems to be one of the latest moral acquisitions. This virtue, one of the noblest with which man is endowed, seems to arise incidentally from our sympathies becoming more tender and more widely diffused, until they are extended to all sentient beings.”

Similarly, Einstein wrote, “A human being is part of the whole called by us universe, a part limited in time and space. We experience ourselves, our thoughts and feelings, as something separate from the rest. A kind of optical delusion of consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest to us. Our task must be to free ourselves from the prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty. The true value of a human being is determined by the measure and the sense in which they have obtained liberation from the self. We shall require a substantially new manner of thinking if humanity is to survive”.

Lastly, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, in his book *Ethics for the New Millennium*, writes: “My call for a spiritual revolution is thus not a call for a religious revolution. Nor is it a reference to a way of life that is somehow otherworldly, still less to something magical or mysterious. Rather it is a call for a radical reorientation away from habitual preoccupation with the self. It is a call to turn toward the wider community of beings with whom we are connected, and for conduct which recognizes others’ interests alongside our own”.

Our most current understanding of the brain is that its structure and function can be changed through experience and training. This is called neuroplasticity. If we already have a biological basis for compassion, there is every reason to believe that through training and practice this compassion can be extended, even on a neurological level. In today’s world, we can draw from both the insights of the world’s spiritual traditions as well as the findings of contemporary science to understand compassion and how it can be expanded for our individual and collective benefit. Taking the biologically-given limited capacity for compassion that we already have and expanding it through deliberate training is the focus and purpose of cognitively-based compassion training. It may seem that cultivating unbiased and universal compassion is an impossibility for us, given where we are at the moment. But as human beings we all have the ability to shift our perspectives on things, even if it is slightly at first, and this means that we all have the ability to gradually expand our compassion, even if it happens in baby steps at first.

*What does “cognitively-based” mean?*

Analytical meditation is often misunderstood to mean discursive meditation, that is, merely thinking about something. But it is better understood as a method for developing insight into something that is being investigated. It involves reflection and close observation of the object of investigation. Just as a lab scientist engages in research by closely observing an object in order to identify what it is and what its characteristics are, so does a meditator analyze an object during analytical meditation. Similarly, just as a physicist comes to understand the nature of subatomic particles through indirect evidence, such as that gleaned from a particle accelerator, so does the meditator also employ indirect evidence and reasoning when engaging in analytical meditation to gain insight into his or her feelings, emotions, motivations, relationships, and experiences. Relating to a given situation from one perspective—say, a distorted perspective—will give a certain response; seeing the same situation from a different perspective—one that is more in tune with the facts of the situation—elicits a completely different response. In this way, insight is essential to being able to relate to our experiences in a more positive way that benefits ourselves and others, and to free us from falling into the same mistakes that result in the same problems.

The point of analytical meditation is to achieve insights or what one could call “a-ha moments.” Such insights then need to be deepened through analyzing from many angles, and through sitting with an insight once it has been arrived at. This conviction that arises from such reflections needs to be deeply engrained so that it becomes second nature, spontaneous, even unconscious. Here, the post-meditation session, namely when we go about our normal life, is just as important as the formal meditation session.

We employ different strategies to achieve insights. For example, to develop a deeper sense of endearment towards others, one strategy is to cultivate gratitude and appreciation on the basis of recognizing how we rely on others for everything that we need and how our own interests are intertwined with those of others. When we employ such strategies, it is important that our reflection not remain on a purely intellectual or detached level. Analytical meditation requires that we make it personal. We need to see for ourselves whether certain things are true or not, and we need to see this as deeply connected with our own lives. Otherwise, what we are doing is not analytical meditation, but merely an intellectual exercise that will fail to have a profound impact on our lives, our behavior, and our relationships with others.

An affective response like compassion arises on the basis of various factors. The Indian philosopher Dharmakirti once posed the rhetorical question, “What can prevent the result from arising, when all the necessary conditions are complete?” His point was that results come from the presence of their conditions, not just by wishful thinking. We might want to develop more compassion due to seeing its benefits, but that wish alone won’t result in our having more compassion any more than a farmer who wants a rich harvest will get it just by wishing for it. If the farmer attends carefully to the conditions necessary for a rich harvest—good soil, the removal of weeds, proper moisture, the seeds, and so on—a good harvest will be the outcome. Similarly, cultivating compassion requires that we ensure the proper conditions that give rise to compassion. These conditions or ingredients will be

presented in the next chapter, where we look at the arc of compassion training through an overview of the eight topics that make up CBCT.

*How is this manual organized?*

Each chapter begins with an introduction that explains the topic for that week and gives an overview of it (“Introduction and Overview”). This is followed by a “Key concepts” section in which the most important concepts and terms that an instructor should aim to convey to participants are identified and defined. The next section includes “Anchoring quotes” from the lojong tradition which serve to illustrate the key concepts at hand. In the section “Bringing it home,” we provide sample analogies, examples, stories and exercises that can be useful in conveying the conceptual material. Instructors are encouraged to use these examples and exercises as they see fit; they need not use all of them, and they need not restrict themselves to the ones provided here. Next comes the “Guided meditation” instructions, which provides a transcript that the instructor can use as a guideline for leading guided meditations. This script is meant to serve as a guide for instructors. There is flexibility in terms of wording and pacing (one should not simply read the instructions to participants), but at the same time instructors should not deviate too far from the meditations provided. Each chapter ends with a “Further resources” guide to reading materials, stories, videos, and other resources that could help in understanding this particular topic.

*Who is this manual for?*

As presented here, the material is intended to be taught in an eight- or ten-week course of two sessions per week (this is a typical standard for adult courses; programs for children and adolescents may vary significantly in frequency, duration and length). In the first session, the material is introduced, and the students are guided through the meditation. We find that it is useful to begin the second session of the week with a discussion and opportunity for questions and comments based on the participants’ own meditation practice and then to lead another guided meditation. In our studies, each participant is provided with an audio CD of the guided meditation for regular practice at home.

While the pedagogical material included here outlines the rationale for the technique and includes important points that should be conveyed to the student, it is not sufficient background, in and of itself, to teach compassion meditation. More importantly, for successful results, only someone who practices it in his or her own life can teach this material. This is an experiential process, not simply an intellectual exercise; the teacher must guide this process from his or her own understanding.

We have developed the CBCT Teacher Training Program to help aspiring teachers and researchers deepen their understanding of this method. While some who engage in this training may do so to strengthen their own practice, or incorporate elements of this practice into their own work, it is imperative that those interested in researching the effects of CBCT do so in consultation with Geshe Lobsang Negi and the Emory-Tibet Partnership. All CBCT classes and programs designed and offered as part of a research study must be

led by a certified CBCT teacher. It is important to maintain the highest degree of rigor while conducting research, both to ensure the reliability of research findings, and to maintain and preserve the integrity of the CBCT program.

## 2. Overview of CBCT

### *Assembling the Conditions that Give Rise to Compassion*

Recall the earlier quote from the Indian philosopher Dharmakirti, who wrote “What can prevent the result from arising, when all the necessary conditions are complete?”

As mentioned, when all the conditions for a rich harvest are present, the harvest itself will naturally come as a result. The same holds true for compassion. We cultivate compassion by cultivating the conditions that give rise to it. In this chapter, we will take a broad look at the CBCT program and how each of the eight topics works together to give rise to the development of greater, more stable, and more powerful compassion. Looking at the program in its totality is important for various reasons. First, as we teach each topic, it is important that we not only understand the topic in itself, but also how it contributes to the cultivation of compassion. Second, it is important that we see how each topic relates to the ones that come before and after it. That way, we fully understand the importance of each topic and also that of the sequence of the program.

Results arise from concordant conditions. As mentioned, just wishing for compassion won't give rise to compassion any more than wishing for more money would yield more money. But if one develops the concordant conditions for compassion, then it will naturally arise. The following chapters of the manual will present each condition needed for compassion in the order in which we will cultivate them and teach them to others. It is also useful to look at the conditions in reverse order, examining what are the immediately preceding conditions for compassion, without which compassion would not arise. Those immediately preceding conditions have their own causes and conditions, and that chain continues until we reach the first stage of the practice. So in the next sections of this chapter, we will look at the arc of cultivating compassion from this perspective. That way we will clearly see all the conditions that are needed to give rise to compassion, and why.

### *Two Crucial Conditions for Compassion: Endearment and Impartiality*

Compassion is the heartfelt wish to relieve others from suffering. Its immediate precondition is a felt inability to bear witnessing the suffering of others. That is to say, when one sees suffering, one finds it disturbing, rather than pleasing or of no consequence. If one did not feel the suffering of others to be unbearable, one would not be moved to see them relieved of suffering, so it is clear that without this unbearability of others' suffering, compassion for them is not possible. This in turn depends on an ability to feel the suffering of others, a sensitivity to their suffering, and for this we need empathy.



Furthermore, the degree of unbearability we feel when witnessing the suffering of others correlates directly with how endearing those others appear to us. The closer we feel to them, the more unbearable we will find their pain. Therefore, if we are to have compassion for others, we need to cultivate a sense of endearment towards others. Our sense of endearment is normally very biased, however. We feel it strongly towards our family members, but it takes on a more indifferent tone towards people whom we do not know very well and whom we do not see as directly relevant to our lives, which is the vast majority of people in the world. When it comes to those we dislike strongly, or even hate, we may feel little if any discomfort in seeing their suffering, or may even, in the worst cases, take pleasure in it.

This is the reason why it is important to cultivate impartiality as a condition for the arising of compassion. Without leveling out our strong biases, our compassion will remain limited to the few nearest and dearest to us. With a greater sense of impartiality, however, we will be able to extend our compassion in ever-widening circles, eventually even embracing all of humanity, including those whom we once considered to be enemies.

As we mentioned the seed of compassion is biologically given in all of us. Cultivating impartiality is like leveling the field, without which even growth is not possible. Developing affection and endearment towards others is like providing moisture that nourishes the seeds and brings about their healthy growth.

*Self-Compassion: The Need for a Secure Base*

An inability to bear the suffering of others does not automatically translate into compassion, however. It can result in what psychologists call empathic distress, or anxiety, paralysis or avoidance that arises when one observes the suffering of another and is overwhelmed by it. Consider two people who witness a bad car crash and see the injured victims. One becomes so distressed by the sight that she turns away and experiences intense anxiety; this is empathic distress. The other witnesses the same thing but rushes over to see if she can be of assistance; this is empathic concern. What is necessary to ensure that witnessing suffering leads to empathic concern, and not empathic distress, is a secure base. A secure base is a type of courage that comes from an inner confidence that suffering can be overcome.

An analogy would be an addict who is in the throes of his addiction and can't see a way out of it. When he sees another addict suffering, this triggers his sense of hopelessness and despair, and he experiences only anxiety. But if he sees that the true source of his addiction is a craving that can in time be brought under control and dealt with, and if he thereby feels a sense of inner confidence in his ability to overcome his affliction with help, his response may change. He now sees a light on the other side of the tunnel, so when he sees a fellow addict suffering, he has a secure base to respond to that person with empathic concern and an offer of help, instead of only responding with empathic distress.

How does one generate such a secure base? It comes from identifying the underlying causes of suffering and generating a determination to emerge from them. Like an alcoholic realizing that alcohol is not a real source of happiness, but rather a cause of suffering. Typically we chase after certain things and reject others; but after analysis we may find that we were blindly chasing causes of suffering while rejecting things that could bring us more lasting happiness. Identifying such mistakes is the first step, but the second step is to resolve to change our habits and perceptions, so that we put ourselves on a path that leads away from suffering and towards happiness. When we realize that the causes of suffering can be transformed, and that we ourselves are in a position to transform them, and when we resolve to do so, we cultivate self-compassion. It is called self-compassion because this is the genuine way for us to care for ourselves and relieve ourselves of unnecessary suffering.

### *Gaining Insight into Our Mental Life and Cultivating Mindfulness*

The point is neither to deny one's cravings, nor indulge in them, but rather to observe them and relate to them in a more healthy manner, gradually gaining a greater degree of mastery over them. This can only happen through the cultivation of a greater state of awareness of our own mental experience. Giving in to craving or aversion only reinforces such patterns, but suppressing them will not work either. The third possibility is transformation by gaining insights into the emotional patterns. That transformation is possible when one can relate to one's experiences in a non-reactive, neutral manner without craving or aversion. From that non-reactive place, one can then use the gap between stimulus and response to decide how to respond to the given emotion. If it is a constructive emotion, one can support it; if it is destructive, one can take measures to limit it.

Dr. Abraham Verghese, in his book *The Tennis Partner*, writes about how many medical students and residents become exposed to suffering without having been properly taught how to deal with the suffering they are witnessing and the emotions and experiences it gives rise to. Without being able to relate to their experiences non-judgmentally, many future doctors have no recourse but to suppress the natural empathy they have for the patients before them, lest they be overcome with empathic distress. A suppression of one's feelings is not healthy in the long run, however, and Dr. Vargas talks about how such individuals may later go on to turn to alcohol and other drugs and addictions to relieve their stress, and even how individuals in the medical profession face higher suicide rates than those in other professions.

When an actual situation arises, it is hard to catch ourselves and move from a reactive place to a non-reactive place, where we can respond thoughtfully and rationally, instead of reacting instinctively or out of established but unhealthy habit-patterns. Fortunately, we can practice this in meditation, and cultivate insight into our mental experience through the practice of resting the mind in its natural state. Natural state here means an uncontrived state of mind that is not chasing after something that we crave, nor pushing away something that we dislike, but merely observing whatever arises in experience in a non-judgmental way. Gradually we learn to relate to experiences without getting immediately caught up in them, and this transforms the way we experience craving and aversion. That in turn allows us to practice self-compassion, because we now have the tools to gradually

wean ourselves away from emotions and thought patterns that lead to suffering, by not giving in to them, and instead strengthen constructive emotions and thought patterns that lead to greater well-being and happiness for ourselves and others.

This practice of observing our inner mental life, whether on the meditation cushion or out in active life, can only take place if we have developed some degree of attentional stability. Generally we are not trained to attend to the moment-by-moment experiences that take place in our minds. We may not notice emotions arising until they become quite strong, or if we do notice them, we may become too caught up with them or distracted by something else before we can address them. Therefore, the cultivation of mindfulness is an essential foundation for learning to rest the mind in its natural state and gain insight into our inner world. In CBCT, we develop mindfulness by focusing on the breath and learning to attend to it moment by moment as it enters and leaves the body. Gradually we refine our attention through this process, like a scientist polishing and focusing a microscope. Once our attention is a bit more refined, we can use our minds to engage in the types of meditations explained above, and we have a great tool for the cultivation of compassion. Mindfulness is therefore foundational and essential for the cultivation of compassion.

### *The Eight Stages of CBCT*

The steps of the practice can be briefly outlined as follows:

1. **Developing Attention and Stability of Mind:** The foundation for the practice is the cultivation of a basic degree of refined attention and mental stability.
2. **Cultivating Insight into the Nature of Mental Experience:** The stabilized mind is then employed to gain insight into the nature of the inner world of thoughts, feelings, emotions and reactions.
3. **Cultivating Self-Compassion:** The student participant observes the innate aspirations for happiness and wellbeing as well as those for freedom from unhappiness and dissatisfactions, i.e., which mental states contribute to fulfillment and which ones prevent it. The participant then makes a determination to emerge from the toxic mental and emotional states that promote unhappiness.
4. **Developing Equanimity:** Normally one tends to hold fast to categories of friends, enemies, and strangers and to react unevenly to people, based on those categories, with over-attachment, indifference and dislike. By examining these categories closely, the participant comes to understand their superficiality and learns to relate to people from a deeper perspective: everyone is alike in wanting to be happy and to avoid unhappiness.
5. **Developing Appreciation and Gratitude for Others:** Although people view themselves as independent, self-sufficient actors, the truth is that no one can thrive or even survive without the support of countless others. When the participant realizes interdependence with others and the many benefits which others offer every day, the participant develops appreciation and gratitude for them.
6. **Developing Affection and Empathy:**

This requires a two-pronged approach; reflecting on the kindness of others, and reflecting on the many drawbacks of a self-centered attitude. The latter weakens self-centeredness, while the former is the active component that strengthens endearment and affection towards others. That endearment and enhanced empathy serves as the catalyst for compassion. The more endearment we feel towards another, the more unbearable we will find their suffering and difficulties, and the more we will rejoice in their happiness and good fortune. [Singer] We will then be impelled to see them relieved of their distress, which is compassion. Deeper contemplation and insight into the ways in which myriad benefits are derived from countless others, along with awareness that this kindness should by rights be repaid, enables the participant to relate to others with a deeper sense of connectedness and affection. By relating to others with a profound sense of affection and endearment, the participant is able to empathize deeply with them. The participant cannot then bear to see others suffer any misfortune and rejoices in their happiness.

7. Realizing Wishing and Aspirational Compassion: Enhanced empathy for others, coupled with intimate awareness of their suffering and its causes, naturally gives rise to compassion: the wish for others to be free from suffering and its conditions.
8. Realizing Active Compassion for Others: In the final step, the participant is guided through a meditation designed to move from simply wishing others to be free of unhappiness to actively committing to assistance in their pursuit of happiness and freedom from suffering. Consistent meditation training develops a greater capacity for compassion, which eventually will become ingrained and spontaneous.

The rest of this manual goes into detail into each of these steps is elaborated in a full chapter. The steps are distinct, yet integrated, and each builds upon the previous stages.

Over that time period, the participant will be led through a series of integrated, cumulative meditations necessary for the systematic development of compassion. When practiced sincerely, this training can be a powerful tool for identifying and observing the components of subjective experience; for understanding how subjective experience colors perception of the outer world; and for working with these observations to gain insight into, and perspective on, interpersonal relationships. When successful, this training enhances positive feelings of connectedness to others, while minimizing feelings of isolation and alienation.

## **Week One**

### **Developing Attention and Stability of Mind**

#### **Pedagogical Material**

Although our presentation of compassion meditation begins with training in concentrative meditation (shamatha), it is important to recognize that the Tibetan Buddhist lam rim (graded stages of the path to enlightenment) literature traditionally locates shamatha in the techniques for practitioners of advanced capacity—highlighting the fact that stabilizing the attention is no easy or quick process. The literature also emphasizes that every practice, from the very beginning, must be accompanied by focused meditation to stabilize and incorporate the understanding that results from analysis, in order to deeply infuse that understanding with one's personal experience. Thus, basic attentional stability is the key to any meditation. Without any basic training in concentrative/mindfulness techniques, it would be difficult for the participant to gain personal, undistorted awareness of inner thoughts, feelings, aspirations and emotions. Without these insights, the participant risks remaining a victim of unconscious impulses and patterns, without the ability to transform these problematic emotional/mental states. Thus these techniques for developing and refining attentional stability form the foundation for all subsequent meditation components in this protocol.

One of the most effective and appropriate ways to develop attentional stability and clarity is mindfulness of breathing. In this context, we use the word “mindfulness” to denote the concept of sustaining awareness of an object or concept, in this case the breath, without forgetfulness or distraction. Training in mindfulness techniques enhances and refines attention.

This first step of meditation training is like focusing a microscope, a tool that can then be directed to examine an object under investigation, to make it clearer and to bring it into focus. The ordinary mind lacks focus; when the mind is too distracted it lacks clarity as well.

The classic analogy used to illustrate this process is training a wild elephant. Three essential tools are required to discipline a wild elephant: a firm pillar, a strong rope, and an attentive trainer. The trainer ties the elephant to a pillar and watches it carefully, correcting the elephant if it tries to make any movement away from the post.

To train the mind to be more attentive and reduce the tendency for distractions, a meditator also requires three tools: a firm object of focus to anchor the unruly elephant mind; a strong rope of mindfulness to tie the elephant mind to the object of focus; and introspective vigilance, or alertness, to monitor and correct when necessary any attempt of the elephant mind to wander away from the object of focus. Like a wild elephant trying to get away from the pillar, the mind continually tries at first to move away from the object of focus. But with alertness one gently brings the mind back, again and again, to the pillar of focus – in this case, the breath – and with mindfulness keeps it present with the breath.

At the beginning of each meditation the participant adjusts his or her posture in order to facilitate stillness and focus and then takes three deep, deliberate breaths in order to initiate a relaxed state. With this relaxed body and mind, the participant begins the art of

refining attention by focusing on the breath, simply sustaining awareness of the incoming and outgoing breath. With introspective vigilance, the participant observes any worries, anticipations, reactions or hopes that distract attention from the breath. Each time this happens the participant is instructed to notice the distraction, to let go of it without trying to repress or reject the thought or emotion, and then to gently bring the attention back again to the breath, for as long as possible, without further distraction.

One phenomenon often noticed by new meditators is that the mind appears to become more distracted and agitated, rather than less so. This observation is deceptive. It is not that thoughts are more numerous or distractions more frequent, but rather that, through the process of observing mental activity, one becomes aware, for the first time, of the constant, continuous chatter just below the threshold of awareness. Enhanced attention makes it possible to become aware of mental activities that previously went unnoticed.

The key attitude to maintain during this meditation is non-judgmental awareness, like that of an innocent child observing a painting for the first time, simply aware in the present moment, without imposing pre-conceptions or value judgments. The idea is to suspend judgment, not become involved in the thought, and return to the breath. Through this process, sustaining concentration from one moment to the next, the meditator develops attentional stability and clarity.

### **Key Concepts**

Attentional stability; clarity; mindfulness; introspective vigilance; letting go.

### **Anchoring Quotes**

Santideva's quote: "A person with a distracted mind abides within the fangs of the afflictive emotions."

### **Sample Class Plan**

- Welcome and Introductions
  - Overview of class plan and structure; class guidelines (safety and confidentiality); emphasis on participation, experience and practice
  - Class rationale (research/self-transformation/health benefits); myths of meditation
  - Setting intention for course
- Pedagogical Material
  - Include overview of attention; recalling times we were inattentive or on "auto-pilot"
- Meditation Instruction
  - Posture: cross-legged on the floor with a straight back or in a chair with feet flat on the floor; hips higher than the knees (help support participants as needed); back straight without being tense, shoulders and face relaxed; chin tucked gently so the neck is long; eyes gazing straight ahead or slightly downward (or closed – discuss); hands resting on the thighs or in the lap
    - Discuss how settling the body settles the mind; posture will become easier with time; show simple stretches if appropriate; emphasize the practice and not perfecting the posture

- Discussion
  - Time for Q&A about practice
  - Set intention for home practice. Have each participant first imagine when and where they will practice. Share with the group and set intention to practice. Discuss together expectations and anxieties, as well as how to work with obstacles

### **Guided Meditation**

First let's establish a physical posture that facilitates focus and alertness. You may sit cross-legged on a cushion on the floor, or in a chair. If you sit in a chair, your feet should be flat on the floor. If you sit on a cushion, it is often helpful to arrange things so that your hips are higher than your knees. If possible, you should attempt to maintain an erect posture, without slumping or leaning, but also without tension. Sit with a straight back, the shoulders level and expanded, but relaxed. The head should be slightly inclined forward, with the chin tucked in. Your eyes may be closed, or left slightly open. If left open, they should be cast down, without focusing on anything specific. Allow your lips and teeth to settle into a relaxed, natural position, gently touching. Place your hands flat on your thighs. The point is to be comfortable, without any strain or tension in the body. If this preferred position is painful or impossible for some reason, you should simply sit comfortably with your back straight. Take a moment to find a posture that feels comfortable to you. Our bodies will become more comfortable with this sitting posture over time.

Throughout each meditation session, let your body be as still as possible. Stillness of the body helps to bring about stillness of the mind. If, however, you feel the need to adjust your posture, try to first notice the sensation and urge to move, and then do so mindfully and with intention.

Let's begin with three slow, deep, gentle breaths through the nostrils. As you inhale, breathe deeply all the way to the bottom of your abdomen, lowering the diaphragm. Then release the breath fully, without forcing it out. As you breathe in, note the sensations as the air moves through the nostrils, down through the chest, deep into the lungs, and note as well the sensation of the abdomen expanding. As you breathe out, release any tension and distress you are holding in the body or mind. Repeat this two more times.

*(0:30 pause—pauses indicated as minute:second throughout)*

Place your attention in the present moment by focusing on your breath. Rest your attention at the nostrils, as gently as a butterfly alighting on a flower. Using that as a reference point, attend to each incoming and outgoing breath by noting the unfolding sensations of in and out breaths. Without forcing the breath in any way, simply maintain awareness of the incoming and outgoing breath. The object is to maintain a balanced focus, neither concentrating too strongly on the breath nor relaxing so much that you lose track of it.

*(1:00 pause)*

As you focus on your breath in this way, you may notice how the mind moves away from the present moment into memories of the past or anticipations of the future. We are often

distracted from the breath by a stream of worries, thoughts, hopes and emotions. As soon as you notice these distractions, try to acknowledge them, and without judging them as good or bad, or without trying to follow them or trying to suppress them, gently return your attention to your breath.

*(2:00 pause)*

Throughout this practice, try to maintain a relaxed alertness, letting go of any tightness in the body or the mind. Simply be at ease, allowing your mind to rest. Each time you notice you have become distracted, try to return your attention to the breath.

*(2:00 pause)*

If you notice that your mind lacks focus and has become dull or even sleepy, try to increase your focus on the breath, and straighten your back. If you need to, open your eyes and stare intensely upward into the space in front of you for a moment. Do this by elevating your eyes, without moving your head. Then return your gaze downward and sustain your attention in the present moment, maintaining awareness of each incoming and outgoing breath.

*(2:00 pause)*

Attend to each moment with openness and awareness. Reconnect with the breath and bring your attention back into the present moment. Hold the awareness of your incoming and outgoing breath.

*(2:00 pause)*

Let's conclude the session now by dedicating the positive effort of our practice to peace and wellbeing throughout the world. Resolve to retain this quality of mindfulness and alertness throughout your daily activities.

*(0:15 pause)*

*(End of meditation: three chimes)*

### **Goals of Practice**

The student participant learns to focus attention and maintain this focus for increasingly longer periods of time.



## **Week Two**

### **Cultivating Insight into the Nature of Mental Experience**

#### **Pedagogical Material**

The objective of the first week was to develop mindfulness skills, with the goal of promoting mental stability, clarity and refined attention. In this second week of the practice, the meditator will learn to rest the mind in its natural state of clarity and awareness, using the refined, focused attention to observe inner experiences. Suspending any judgment or reactions, and resisting the temptation to participate in inner dialogues, the meditator gains insight into the changing nature of sensations, thoughts, feelings and emotions. In the Tibetan tradition, this practice is called *shamatha* and is focused on the nature of the mind itself.

It is important to convey that the student should not attempt to push away thoughts or any other mental event that arises. The key is to be aware of whatever arises in the mind without running away from it, without becoming involved with it, and without identifying with it. By letting go of any efforts to categorize the contents of mental experience, to react to it, or to comment on it, one allows the mind to rest in an uncontrived state. Progressive practice leads to an abiding sense of tranquil joy, of spaciousness, and of an absence of conceptual activity. It is important that these experiences should be simply observed, without grasping them, rejecting them, or becoming involved with them.

Rather than persisting to anchor the attention onto the breath, the practitioner should let the mind rest in its uncontrived, natural state, aware of the thoughts that come and go, without being involved in them or identifying with them. In this way, the mind will be freed from its tendencies to react with grasping or suppression. When one engages in this meditation, one relates to his or her unfolding thoughts, worries, fears, and hopes as if they were like waves on the surface of the ocean. There is stillness deep in the ocean, though surface waves of many kinds and sizes occur depending on various conditions. Those waves emerge and then subside back into the stillness of the ocean. When one relates to one's own unfolding inner thoughts by simply observing them, without rejecting or pursuing them, they too gradually subside into the stillness and calm of the mind.

Another useful analogy is the spaciousness of the sky, which simply exists without blocking any object that wishes to arise in it, nor retaining any object that tries to move through it. Clouds and rainbows manifest when the conditions are appropriate, and dissolve back into the sky when the conditions change. Learning to relate to one's mind like the sky, one is able to allow mental activities to pass without blocking them or grasping at them. Suspending any such attempts, one can connect with the mind's inherent radiance, serenity and spaciousness.

#### **Key Concepts**

Resting the mind in its natural state; observing the arising and passing of thoughts; generating a non-judging attitude; acceptance.

## Anchoring Quotes

### Sample Class Plan

- Settling practice
- Check-in: home practice – successes and obstacles; questions from last week
- Pedagogy
  - Positive and Negative Thoughts/Feeling States Exercise
    - Practice calling up and experiencing positive and negative feelings; remind participants they can choose to end the exercise at any time and simply return to their breath, or relax.
    - Assume a comfortable seated posture with eyes closed. Recall a time when you were angry with someone or about a particular situation. Try to relive this experience by recalling as much detail as possible. As you do this, note how this experience feels in your body. What do you notice? Where do you notice it? (*pause*) Now try to exaggerate the feeling, in whatever way feels right to you. (*Here participants usually use mental strategies to increase or intensify an experience – this is important to note later.*) Now let this image fade, and return to the breath.
    - Repeat with an experience of feeling loved and deeply connected
    - Discussion points: What did you notice about that experience? Describe how these two experiences felt in the body. Did you prefer one experience over the other? Which felt healthier? What strategies did you use to increase the experience? (*We can generate these states at will; we are the ‘recipient’ of our anger – not the person we are angry at, etc.*)
  - Stress response
    - Offer an overview of the stress response. What happens in our bodies? What are the consequences of stress? Acknowledge that a little stress can motivate us, but chronic stress can have deleterious effects on our health and well-being. Note especially how we can become stressed by situations and also by our *thoughts* about situations. This is why it is so important to become aware of these thoughts, to become familiar with our ‘mental scripts’ and to recognize that thoughts are not facts, but they do have real-world effects. (*Might also try a visualization to induce the experience of stress. E.g. imagine sitting around a camp fire in the middle of the woods and you hear a noise, as if an animal is approaching; OR, discuss public speaking, and allow the participants to describe what happens in their bodies. Work towards greater awareness of feelings in the body*)
  - “Resting the Mind”
    - Offer an overview of the practice (flashlight/floodlight analogy); noticing how thoughts/feelings color our perception. Give example of the “coffee cup study” (i.e. subliminal images flashed before everyday objects are rated as “less pleasing”; we often don’t notice

how we are affected by our thoughts, emotions and biases), or other examples of bias and stereotype

- Meditation Practice
  - Review posture; gentle stretching
- Discussion
- Renew home practice intentions

### **Guided Meditation**

Let's review the meditation postures that will facilitate alertness. You can sit on a cushion on the floor or in a chair. If you are sitting in a chair, your feet should be flat on the floor. If you sit on a cushion, it is often helpful to arrange things so that your hips are higher than your knees. If possible, you should attempt to maintain an erect posture, without slumping or leaning, but also without tension. Sit with a straight back, the shoulders level and expanded, but relaxed. The head should be slightly inclined forward, with the chin tucked in. Your eyes may be closed, or left slightly open. If left open, they should be cast down, without focusing on anything specific. Allow your lips and teeth to settle into a relaxed, natural position, gently touching. Place your hands flat on your thighs. The point is to be comfortable, without any strain or tension in the body. If this preferred position is painful or impossible for some reason, you should simply sit comfortably with your back straight. Take a moment to find a posture that feels comfortable to you. Our bodies will become more comfortable with this sitting posture over time.

*(0:05 pause)*

Begin with three deep breaths. As you did last week, breathe in and then out, slowly and deeply. Repeat two more times.

*(0:30 pause)*

Place your attention in the present moment by focusing on your breath. Rest your attention at your nostrils, as gently as a butterfly alighting on a flower. Using that as a reference point, attend to the unfolding sensations of each incoming and outgoing breath. Without forcing the breath in any way, simply maintain awareness of the incoming and outgoing breath. You want to maintain a balanced focus, neither concentrating too strongly on the breath nor relaxing so much that you lose track of it.

*(1:00 pause)*

Now direct your attention from your breath to your unfolding inner experiences: the thoughts, images, desires, emotions and any other events that arise within the space of your mind. Simply try to note their arising, without following trains of thought or becoming entangled in them.

*(2:00 pause)*

Relax into your awareness. Witness the stream of thoughts, images, and emotions that arise, without being caught up in them or carried away by them. Attend gently, without preference for any one kind of thought over another, without grasping at some emotions or trying to control others. As you continue to be aware, maintain a state of relaxed

observation and attentiveness. Simply be present and aware in each moment, suspending judgment. Whatever comes up, try to just let it be.

*(2:00 pause)*

If you become completely distracted, and find that your mind has wandered away to memories of the past or anticipations of the future, return your attention to the breath for a few rounds to settle the mind.

*(2:00 pause)*

Try to relate to your thoughts and emotions with a sense of equanimity, without suppressing or becoming involved with them. Notice that they arise in the mind like the waves on the surface of the ocean. Despite the constant motion of the waves, the depths of the ocean remain calm, untouched by the turbulent surface. Relating to your mind in this way, rest in the underlying stillness of your mind.

*(2:00 pause)*

Let your mind be like the boundless sky, like space that does not block anything from manifesting in it nor fixate on anything that arises in it. Simply observe the cloud-like thoughts, feelings and emotions that arise in the space of the mind, without suppressing them or grasping onto them, and allow them to subside into the space of your own mind.

*(2:00 pause)*

Let's conclude the session now by dedicating the positive effort of our practice to peace and wellbeing throughout the world. Resolve to retain this quality of mindfulness and alertness throughout your daily activities.

*(0:15 pause)*

*(End of meditation: three chimes)*

### **Goals of Practice**

When successful, this meditation frees one from habitual tendencies to identify with unfolding mental experiences; turbulent mental experiences begin to subside. Insight into their changing nature ensues. As a result, one experiences tranquil joy, spaciousness, and an absence of conceptual activity.

## **Week Three**

### **Self-Compassion**

#### **Pedagogical Material**

The Tibetan Buddhist tradition states that everyone shares one fundamental aspiration: an inborn, innate yearning to be happy and to be free of suffering. All people wish for their own happiness and fulfillment while simultaneously wishing to be free from discomforts and misfortunes of any kind.

Last week, participants gained insight into the changing nature of sensations, thoughts, feelings and emotions by observing them without reacting to them or becoming involved in them. From this practice arises the insight that underlying all thoughts, all mental scripts, is a yearning for happiness and fulfillment and a desire to be free from dissatisfaction and unhappiness. In other words, we wish to avoid things that make us unhappy and hold on to those things which make us happy. Reflection on the human condition reveals that one is constantly vulnerable to insecurity, anxiety, disappointment and other forms of dissatisfaction. We have difficulty recognizing and embracing change. Too often we grasp onto a narrow, concrete and unchanging sense of ourselves and others in an attempt to create stability, yet grasping at factors that are by nature unstable and impermanent invariably cause more stress and anxiety.

When one investigates the sources of suffering, one finds that unhappiness does not arise entirely from external circumstances or setbacks but primarily from the way one relates to circumstances, from emotional and behavioral reactions to them. It is important to recognize how external conditions in and of themselves – such as social and economic status, material resources, praise, etc. -- are not the sources of genuine happiness. All external conditions, as well as experiences such as youth, pleasures and relationships, are impermanent and subject to change. Nothing lasts forever. Embracing this reality reduces anxiety and despair when one is inevitably separated from people or circumstances that are wanted, or confronted with circumstances one would prefer to avoid. Much unhappiness arises from lack of understanding of the limitations of external factors and from unrealistic expectations of any advantages they might bring.

There is a connection between one's thoughts and emotions and one's happiness or unhappiness. Key to making this connection is the recognition that destructive emotions and reactions lead to the very unhappiness and unease that one wishes to avoid and that their cessation, along with the concordant positive mental states, gives rise to the peace and wellbeing to which one deeply aspires. The insight that happiness and unhappiness are states that arise from one's own mind, rather than being imposed by external circumstances, is powerful and transformative.

When these connections are made in the context of personal experience, two additional powerful insights arise from this observation and analysis: suffering can be overcome by changing its underlying causes; and one has the ability to do this. This practice gives a strong boost to self-esteem, self-confidence and security. Rather than identifying with negative thoughts and emotions, one recognizes that they are superficial and adventitious, and one's fundamental nature remains pure, untouched by them.

The student is asked this week to examine the genuine causes of happiness and unhappiness and then to move further: to understand that the contributors to unhappiness

can be changed and dissolved, and that everyone has the ability to make those changes. The student is then asked to take a further step: to make a determination to create those changes for him or herself. This wish to be free of suffering, coupled with the determination to free oneself of inner negativities, is known in the Tibetan Buddhist literature as *nge-jung* (the determination to emerge), which is described here as “self-compassion”.

The essence of *nge-jung* is the determination to emerge from suffering by freeing oneself from destructive emotions and reactions. This resolve must become firmly established and thoroughly ingrained. When one contemplates one’s own suffering, one develops *nge-jung*. When one contemplates how others suffer, one develops compassion. Therefore, *nge-jung* is a necessary step in the process of developing compassion for others.

The practice of self-compassion described here requires a profound sense of vulnerability – we are inviting participants to examine their suffering, their losses and weaknesses, and to try to recognize that they have an ability to make a profound transformation. This work necessitates a sense of security and safety, and it is essential to acknowledge this.

### **Key concepts**

Recognizing the innate desire for happiness and freedom from suffering; that mental suffering can be overcome and that one has the ability to overcome it. Realizing the key is developing an understanding of the emotional states that contribute to happiness and of those that lead to unhappiness, as well as resolving to emerge from inner toxic states of mind and crippling emotional reaction patterns. Discovering self-esteem and self-confidence.

### **Anchoring Quotes**

Shantideva: “Where could I possibly find the leather to cover the whole surface of the earth? But with leather just on the soles of my shoes, it’s the same as having covered the entire earth’s surface.”

Shantideva “All the suffering in the world comes from wanting happiness only for oneself. All the happiness in the world comes from wanting happiness for others.”

### **Sample Class Plan**

- Settling-in practice
- Discussion of home practice
- Pedagogy
  - This topic is deep and it is difficult to address in one session. The goal is to understand the components of “self-compassion” as described here: identifying the causes of suffering; recognizing that we have an ability to change them; and making a determination to change or overcome them.
    - Addressing causes of suffering: It can help to use an analogy here. For example, imagine you wake up one morning with a terrible headache. What caused your headache? A heavy night of drinking? What caused a heavy night of drinking? (Some might

say a party...) Was it feeling lonely? What caused feelings of loneliness? An inability to connect? The aim here is to drill-down into our experiences of suffering and attempt to get at the source. We are not treating the symptoms, but rather the causes.

- Recognizing how we contribute to our own suffering: We cannot change the world, but we can change the ways in which we respond to the world. Think of a difficult experience you had recently that you would be willing to share with the group. How did you react to this situation? Were there thoughts, expectations, scripts that made this experience worse? Were some useful? (Try to draw out our resistance to change, our concern with status, praise, image, ego, etc.) For next week, try to catch these trains of thought as they arise during a difficult experience. Become more familiar with the ways in which our own mental patterns cause us more difficulty.
- We can change: Share information on neuroplasticity (see Davidson, or Begley's *Train Your Mind, Change Your Brain*, for an accessible overview).
- Make a determination to change: help participants set intention
- Vulnerability: As mentioned, this practice requires profound vulnerability. Many may find this difficult. Here you may wish to incorporate a mentor practice to help prime secure attachment and make people feel safe. You might also play a vulnerability game or two (depending largely on the group!). Place a scale on the ground numbered one through five (one being never, five being always). Read out a list of common insecurities and vulnerabilities (e.g. "I don't feel good enough", "I put a lot of pressure on myself"; I'm afraid of XXX"). Ask participants to stand on the scale to represent how they feel, and notice how many others share a similar concern or fear. Provide some background on attachment theory here, perhaps.
  - Address differences between popular conceptions of self-compassion (as self-acceptance and self-love) and the one described here.
- Meditation: Guided practices get more difficult here. Be sure that everyone understands the practice sequence. Take time to ask what came up for participants during the practice to be sure they understand this style of meditation.
- Discussion

### **Guided Meditation**

Begin by adjusting your posture as instructed previously so that you are comfortable, without any strain or tension in the body.

*(0:05 pause)*

Begin with three rounds of breathing. Breathe in and out, slowly and deeply, three times.

*(0:30 pause)*

Place your attention in the present moment by focusing on your breath. Rest your attention at your nostrils, as gently as a butterfly alighting on a flower. Using that as a reference point, attend to the unfolding sensations of each incoming and outgoing breath. Without forcing the breath in any way, simply maintain awareness of the incoming and outgoing breath. You want to maintain a balanced focus, neither concentrating too strongly on the breath nor relaxing so much that you lose track of it.

*(0:30 pause)*

Now let go of focusing on the breath and simply let your mind relax into its natural state. Quietly witness the stream of thoughts, images, and emotions that arise, without being caught up in them or carried away by them, without intentionally inviting or blocking any particular thought, without any expectations or worries. Attend gently, without preference for any one kind of thought over another, without grasping at some emotions or trying to avoid others. As you continue to be aware, maintain a state of relaxed observation and attentiveness. Be present and aware in each moment, suspending judgment, without retracing the past or anticipating the future, without trying to regulate the present. Whatever comes up, just let it be without becoming involved with it.

*(2:00 pause)*

Let your mind be like the boundless sky, like space that does not block anything from manifesting in it nor fixate on anything that arises in it. Simply observe the cloud-like thoughts, feelings and emotions that arise in the space of the mind, without suppressing them or grasping onto them, and allow them to subside into the space of your own mind.

*(2:00 pause)*

Now begin to reflect on your inner world of thoughts and emotions. See if you can recognize that underlying all of our mental experience, all of our hopes, expectations and worries, is the yearning for happiness and for freedom from suffering. Try to connect with this innate aspiration and wish.

*(2:00 pause)*

Let's now take a moment to reflect on our lives. See if you can recall times when you felt deprived of things you wanted, and how often you were handed situations or circumstances that you didn't wish for. We cannot always control the external world or circumstances, but we can control our reactions to it/them. Sometimes our expectations cause us more suffering: we want things to work a certain way, and they don't, or we want things to stay a certain way, and they change. Sometimes we look to material things or situations to bring us happiness – we want more money, a promotion, more recognition, etc., and yet, when we look deeply, we realize that none of these things can guarantee lasting happiness. We all will experience sickness and death. None of these things – wealth, status, pleasures, praise – are permanent. It's important to note, too, that difficult experiences are not permanent either.

*(3:00 pause)*

We usually feel that external circumstances themselves are to blame for our unhappiness. If we reflect more carefully, however, we may see that it is primarily our afflictive



emotional and behavioral reactions to circumstances that exacerbate our mental suffering. Recall a difficult situation you experienced recently – an argument, a disappointment, a loss. Take a moment to recall this situation in as much detail as possible. Notice how it feels in your body. Take time to recall your thoughts about this situation. What happened? What were your expectations? Were you expecting something that did not occur? Were you wishing for things to be a certain way? Wishing to avoid certain people or experiences? Was there part of you that engaged in self-criticism or self-doubt that may have exacerbated the situation? How did your thoughts about the situation affect your experience?

*(2:00 pause)*

Perhaps you were able to notice your reactions, and lessen your experience of suffering or stress. Recall these strategies you used. If you feel emotionally charged now, take a moment to reflect on the causes of suffering, and the ways in which we can contribute to our suffering. Try to release some of this unease and tension.

*(2:00 pause)*

Recognize that you can transform your mental patterns. Try to generate this thought as strongly as you can: “My unhealthy patterns can be transformed, and I have the potential to transform them. I resolve to transform my unhealthy emotional and behavioral patterns in order to emerge from suffering and realize my aspirations for happiness.”

*(2:00 pause)*

As you maintain this resolve, imagine the essential goodness of your own awareness as a pearl of radiant white light at your heart. That radiant white light is the essence of all the strength and goodness within you. See this light expand to every part of your body and mind, and by doing so, it relieves you of all discomforts, anxieties, fears, jealousy and other negative emotions.

*(2:00 pause)*

Now return your attention to the breath. Remain relaxed and simply be aware of the flow of your breath.

*(0:30 pause)*

Let's conclude the session by dedicating the positive effort of your practice to peace and wellbeing throughout the world. As you arise from the meditation period, resolve to maintain this sense of calm and stillness in all your daily activities.

*(0:15 pause)*

*(End of meditation: three chimes)*

#### Goals of practice

When successful, a practitioner sees how experiences of happiness or unhappiness depend primarily on inner attitudes and the way that he or she relates to other people and external circumstances. The practitioner sees that afflictive emotions are the result of distorted perceptions, that these emotions can be transformed, and that he or she is capable of bringing about that transformation, thus liberating himself or herself from

unwanted suffering. This insight culminates in a firm resolve to emerge from unhealthy, conditioned emotional patterns, thereby reducing personal suffering and increasing happiness.

## **Week Four**

### **Cultivating Equanimity**

#### **Pedagogical Material**

In the last three weeks we have laid the foundation for altruistic compassion. This foundation has been built through a series of steps:

- learning to develop attentional stability and clarity
- developing insight into one's inner world of thoughts, feelings, emotions and mental experiences
- allowing these mental experiences to settle, thus allowing the natural state of the mind to emerge
- reflecting on the pervasive dissatisfaction and the suffering nature of ordinary life to gain deeper insights into how these are primarily generated by inner destructive emotions and reactions
- realizing that these destructive emotions and reactions can be transformed
- understanding that the participant has the ability to transform them
- generating the deep determination to transform them in order to allow inherent goodness and wellbeing to unfold.

To summarize the previous lesson, self-compassion is a determination to free oneself from destructive emotions and behavioral patterns, born from a deep understanding of the manner in which suffering and dissatisfaction are perpetuated in one's own life.

Extending this compassion to others requires that one respond to misfortunes and suffering as if they were one's own. In the same way one wishes happiness for oneself, one wishes for others to be free from their unhappiness. Central to this compassionate response to others' misfortunes is a healthy empathy, which grows from the ability to relate to others with a feeling of endearment, or affection, like a mother for her only, cherished child. Affection towards people who are seemingly unrelated or irrelevant to one does not come naturally. By changing one's perspective on others, however, and viewing them through the lens of interdependence, it is possible to relate to everyone with a deep sense of appreciation and affection. A major hurdle preventing one from relating to others in this way is the ingrained tendency to put others in solid categories—friends/family, enemies, and irrelevant strangers—based on superficial interactions. This partiality creates and reinforces feelings of isolation, preventing one from feeling connected to other people. Overcoming these biases to develop equanimity is the next step on the road to altruistic compassion.

One finds the suffering of friends and family – or one's own, for that matter – to be unbearable. On the other hand, one often enjoys the misfortunes of one's enemies and is generally indifferent to the suffering of strangers. *Lojong* practitioners recognize that this biased treatment of others is groundless. Distinctions between friend, enemy and stranger are artificial, temporary and fluctuating. Numerous examples can be found in one's own life and certainly in the public arena: a person one disliked at first meeting later becomes a trusted companion; a husband becomes bitter towards a formerly beloved spouse; nations change alliances; groups that were at odds find common ground. In truth, no one arrived in this world with a single friend or with any enemies. All were unconsciously created later in the mind, under the influence of various conditions, thoughts and

emotions. It is perhaps possible, then, to view every stranger as a potential friend, and to recognize that there is nothing inherent in any individual that causes them to be a friend or an enemy. These words are simply changeable, temporary labels. Looking beyond these superficial differences, we perceive a common and uniting aspiration: everyone shares a fundamental wish for happiness and for freedom from misfortunes and suffering. From the foundation of this equanimity, one can develop impartial appreciation and unbiased affection for all others. In turn, affection is the catalyst for empathy and compassion, and creates strong feelings of social connection to others as well.

An objection sometimes raised to this exercise is that it diminishes the importance of friends and family. It should be emphasized that the object is simply to blur strict boundaries, not to detract from the importance of significant relationships. The point is not to care less about one's family and friends, but to learn to care equally about the people one now consider strangers and enemies. Then, too, when one looks at family and friends, one wants to learn to relate to them as individuals, not simply as extensions of oneself. They are important in their own right, in other words, independent of any relationship to oneself.

### **Key concepts**

Understanding Equanimity; realizing that the categories of friend, enemy and stranger are superficial and not absolute; discovering that all people share a common aspiration for happiness and freedom from misfortune and suffering. (There are three kinds of equanimity: non-reactivity or non-discrimination, used the cultivation of shamatha; equanimity of feelings, which describes neutral feelings that are neither pleasurable nor unpleasurable; and immeasurable equanimity, which is one of the four immeasurables.)

### **Anchoring Quotes**

XXX

### **Sample Class Plan**

- Settling-in practice
- Discussion of home practice
  - Did you have any difficult experiences over the past week? Did you notice your mental patterns? Were you able to catch them?
- Pedagogy
  - **"I care/I don't care" game:**
    - Stretch a piece of tape across the floor. Label one end "I care" and the other end "I don't care". The tape represents a caring, or empathy scale, and participants are invited to stand on the tape in response to different scenarios. Ask them to describe why they chose to stand on the tape where they did, reminding that there are no correct answers.
    - *I'm going to ask you to notice how you feel about someone else's feeling. We're going to make a caring scale to help us all see it more clearly. I'm going to stretch a rope across the floor. At that end is I really care. You stand there when you really feel for someone else's situation. You strongly understand, imagine or feel their feelings, and you strongly*

*wish you could help them feel better. In the middle is some care and at this end is almost no feeling at all - you don't really feel sorry for them or feel like you want to help make it better. You just don't care.*

- Sample scenarios: Your best friend got a promotion. Your worst enemy got a promotion. The women in your office receive less pay than the men. Your kid was caught cheating on a test in school. The kid that bullies your child was caught cheating on a test in school (vary these using the three categories; also sensitively explore race and gender issues, and other stereotypes, being sure to remind people that we are all aware of the social pressures to respond in certain ways, but that each participant should track their own initial response, and are free to decide whether to share this with the group.)
- Questions for discussion: who were you able to relate to? People similar to you? Those who shared a similar experience? What strategies can you use to connect with others (some will do this as you play the game, i.e. “well I don't really empathize, but I *could* imagine why someone might think/feel/do that...”). Can you notice how we reduce others to categories or stereotypes in order to not empathize? It is often those closest to us who we see as most fully human and most complex. Can we extend this to others?
- Kisa Gotami's Story: Kisa Gotami's infant son dies. She visits a great sage who tells her to collect three mustard seeds from a home in the village where no one grieves for the loss of a loved one. She visits homes one by one, only to learn that everyone has lost someone. The story invites people to recognize that we share many of the same sufferings, and that others suffer just like us.
- Meditation: You might need to clarify the “categories” taught in this lesson and ask participants to think of three people before you begin the meditation
- Discussion

### **Guided Meditation**

Begin by adjusting your posture as instructed previously so that you are comfortable, without any strain or tension in the body.

*(0:05 pause)*

Begin with three rounds of breathing. Breathe in and out, slowly and deeply, three times.

*(0:30 pause)*

Place your attention in the present moment by focusing on your breath. Rest your attention at your nostrils, as gently as a butterfly alighting on a flower. Using that as a reference point, attend to the unfolding sensations of each incoming and outgoing breath. Without forcing the breath in any way, simply maintain awareness of the incoming and outgoing breath. You want to maintain a balanced focus, neither concentrating too strongly on the breath nor relaxing so much that you lose track of it.

*(0:30 pause)*

Now let go of focusing on the breath and simply let your mind relax into its natural state. Whatever comes up, just let it be without becoming involved with it.

*(2:00 pause)*

Let's now take a moment to reflect on our lives. See if you can recall times when you felt deprived of things you wanted, and how often you were handed situations or circumstances that you didn't wish for. We cannot always control the external world or circumstances, but we can control our reactions to it/them. Sometimes our expectations cause us more suffering: we want things to work a certain way, and they don't, or we want things to stay a certain way, and they change. Sometimes we look to material things or situations to bring us happiness – we want more money, a promotion, more recognition, etc., and yet, when we look deeply, we realize that none of these things can guarantee lasting happiness. We all will experience sickness and death. None of these things – wealth, status, pleasures, praise – are permanent. It's important to note, too, that difficult experiences are not permanent either.

*(3:00 pause)*

We usually feel that external circumstances themselves are to blame for our unhappiness. If we reflect more carefully, however, we may see that it is primarily our afflictive emotional and behavioral reactions to circumstances that exacerbate our mental suffering. Recall a difficult situation you experienced recently – an argument, a disappointment, a loss. Take a moment to recall this situation in as much detail as possible. Notice how it feels in your body. Take time to recall your thoughts about this situation. What happened? What were your expectations? Were you expecting something that did not occur? Were you wishing for things to be a certain way? Wishing to avoid certain people or experiences? Was there part of you that engaged in self-criticism or self-doubt that may have exacerbated the situation? How did your thoughts about the situation affect your experience?

*(2:00 pause)*

Perhaps you were able to notice your reactions, and lessen your experience of suffering or stress. Recall these strategies you used. If you feel emotionally charged now, take a moment to reflect on the causes of suffering, and the ways in which we can contribute to our suffering. Try to release some of this unease and tension.

*(2:00 pause)*

Recognize that you can transform your mental patterns. Try to generate this thought as strongly as you can: “My unhealthy patterns can be transformed, and I have the potential to transform them. I resolve to transform my unhealthy emotional and behavioral patterns in order to emerge from suffering and realize my aspirations for happiness.”

*(2:00 pause)*

Now bring to your mind, as vividly as you can, three people. The first should be someone dear to you, someone you love and feel close to. This could be a family member or a close friend. Recall all the good qualities of this person. The second person should be

someone you don't know so well, someone for whom you have no special sense of closeness or distance. Think of a real person you see often, maybe someone at a business you visit or someone at workplace you have never spoken to. Finally, bring to mind someone you strongly dislike or who has done some harm to you. Vividly picture all three people in front of you. Don't just think about them in the abstract, try to picture them clearly, as if they were standing right in front of you.

*(1:00 pause)*

Imagine a good event happening to your friend or family member. Notice how you feel.

*(0:30 pause)*

Now imagine the very same good thing happening to the stranger. Notice how you feel

*(0:30 pause)*

Now see that same good event happening to the person you dislike. Notice how you feel.

*(0:30 pause)*

The same good event happened to these three people; did you feel the same way for each person?

*(0:30 pause)*

Now let's imagine a bad event happening to your friend or family member. Notice how you feel.

*(0:30 pause)*

Imagine that same bad thing happening to the stranger, and again notice how you feel.

*(0:30 pause)*

Now imagine that same event happening to the person you dislike. Notice how you feel. Do you feel a sense of enjoyment?

*(0:30 pause)*

Again, in reaction to the very same event happening to three different people, we may experience radically different feelings. Let's think more carefully about these reactions. These three categories of friend, enemy and stranger are superficial and changeable. We may have had friends that have become enemies, strangers that have become friends, and enemies that have become our closest support. Think of your own experiences or examples from the larger world (e.g. national and political alliances; family situations, etc.).

*(1:00 pause)*

Moving beyond these superficial categories, let's try to relate to all three people from a broader perspective. As you look at each of them in turn, try to recognize that they all share a basic yearning to be happy and to be free from suffering, just like us. Allow this insight to sink into your heart.

*(1:00 pause)*

Now expand this insight gradually to include your immediate family and the people you interact with frequently, and then further, to eventually encompass all humanity. Fundamentally, in their aspiration to be free of problems and suffering, in desiring wellbeing and happiness, there is no difference among these people. Everyone, equally, wants to be happy and to be free from suffering. Sit with this awareness and let it sink into your heart.

*(2:00 pause)*

Let's conclude the session by dedicating the positive effort of your practice to peace and wellbeing throughout the world. As you return to your daily routine, resolve to relate to people from our shared desire to be happy and to be free from suffering.

*(0:15 pause)*

*(End of meditation: three chimes)*

### **Goals of Practice**

The successful practitioner becomes less prone to excessive emotional reactivity, due to his or her ability to relate to others with equanimity. The absolute categories of friend, enemy and stranger are dissolved in favor of a broader perspective, in which everyone is viewed equally and impartially as desiring happiness and freedom from suffering.



## Week Five

### Developing Appreciation and Gratitude for Others

#### Pedagogical Material

We noted earlier that unbiased affection that does not differentiate among friends, enemies and strangers is the catalyst for empathy and compassion. From the foundation of equanimity we can proceed to build this affection through the necessary intermediate step of developing appreciation and gratitude for others.

The *lojong* practitioner examines how all comforts and accomplishments, indeed everything that he or she enjoys, comes from others. Every single bite of food one eats, every item of clothing one wears, is made possible through the efforts of countless others, most of whom one has no direct contact with. Whether these countless others intend it or not, their efforts benefit us through the infinite web of interconnectedness. Close reflection reveals how one owes one's very existence to the kindness of other people. This realization generates an enormous shift in perspective; one usually views oneself as an autonomous, independent and self-sufficient actor. But the truth is that no one could thrive or even survive without the support of countless others. Seeing one's own life from this larger framework of interconnectedness and interdependence leads one to develop a sense of appreciation and gratitude for others.

One should begin by cultivating appreciation and gratitude for those from whom one has derived obvious benefit – such as the parents who gave one life and the teachers who provided one's education – and then extending one's appreciation and gratitude to strangers and even to one's so-called enemies. The goal is to expand the scope of one's appreciation and gratitude to everyone who is the source of benefits, directly or indirectly, whether or not they intend to be of assistance. Gradually one will find some benefit even in adverse circumstances, such as seeing the helpful message hidden in criticism. A bitter medicine one takes has no intention to cure one's illness, yet one values and cherishes it because it helps one regain health. Similarly, it's not important that others have the intention to be of benefit; what is important are the benefits that one derives. That itself is the reason to appreciate others and to be grateful to them. It is helpful to base this analysis in specific instances or examples, such as an item of food or clothing that one enjoys or a skill or accomplishment that contributes to success in life. One can contemplate how many beings contribute to this single item in the infinite web of interconnectedness. It is common for one to overlook the intricate web of relationships that connects one to others and therefore to go through the day with a mistaken sense of independence: engaged in rivalry with those one views as equals, jealous of those one perceives as having advantages, and contemptuous of those one feels are inferior.

Deep appreciation and gratitude naturally arise when one reflects on the vast network of beings that supports one's existence and realizes that one's own survival completely depends on their intended and unintended kindness. This feeling may be contrived at first, but with persistent effort and familiarization it will become natural and spontaneous.

#### Key concepts

acknowledging the kindness of others; understanding interconnectedness, interdependence, appreciation for others, and gratitude.

## Anchoring Quotes

### Sample Class Plan

- Settling-in practice
- Discussion of home practice
- Pedagogy
  - Web of Interdependence: explore interconnection. Ask participants to think of something they need for survival (e.g. food, coffee), and discuss all of the things that this depends on.
    - Share Dr. Suess's *The Lorax*
  - Discuss gratitude: share Emmons' work on the benefits of keeping a gratitude journal.
  - Think of the incredible acts of kindness that others have bestowed on us.

Share Naomi Shihab Nye's poem, *Kindness*:

Before you know what kindness really is  
you must lose things,  
feel the future dissolve in a moment  
like salt in a weakened broth.  
What you held in your hand,  
what you counted and carefully saved,  
all this must go so you know  
how desolate the landscape can be  
between the regions of kindness.  
How you ride and ride  
thinking the bus will never stop,  
the passengers eating maize and chicken  
will stare out the window forever.

Before you learn the tender gravity of kindness,  
you must travel where the Indian in a white poncho  
lies dead by the side of the road.  
You must see how this could be you,  
how he too was someone  
who journeyed through the night with plans  
and the simple breath that kept him alive.

Before you know kindness as the deepest thing inside,  
you must know sorrow as the other deepest thing.  
You must wake up with sorrow.  
You must speak to it till your voice  
catches the thread of all sorrows  
and you see the size of the cloth.

Then it is only kindness that makes sense anymore,

only kindness that ties your shoes  
and sends you out into the day to mail letters and  
purchase bread,  
only kindness that raises its head  
from the crowd of the world to say  
it is I you have been looking for,  
and then goes with you every where  
like a shadow or a friend.

- Meditation
- Discussion and Homework
  - Ask participants to keep a gratitude journal for the week

### **Guided Meditation**

Begin by adjusting your posture so that you are comfortable, without any strain or tension in the body.

*(0:05 pause)*

Begin with the three rounds of breathing. Breathe in and out, slowly and deeply, three times.

*(0:30 pause)*

Place your attention in the present moment by focusing on your breath. Rest your attention at your nostrils, as gently as a butterfly alighting on a flower. Using that as a reference point, attend to the unfolding sensations of each incoming and outgoing breath. Without forcing the breath in any way, simply maintain awareness of the incoming and outgoing breath. You want to maintain a balanced focus, neither concentrating too strongly on the breath nor relaxing so much that you lose track of it.

*(0:30 pause)*

Now let go of focusing on the breath and simply let your mind relax into its natural state. Whatever comes up, just let it be without becoming involved with it.

*(2:00 pause)*

Let's now take a moment to reflect on our lives. Again recall times when you felt deprived of things you wanted, and how often you were handed situations or circumstances that you didn't wish for. We cannot always control the external world or circumstances, but we can control our reactions to it/them. Sometimes our expectations cause us more suffering: we want things to work a certain way, and they don't, or we want things to stay a certain way, and they change. Sometimes we look to material things or situations to bring us happiness – we want more money, a promotion, more recognition, etc., and yet, when we look deeply, we realize that none of these things can guarantee lasting happiness. We all will experience sickness and death. None of these things – wealth, status, pleasures, praise – are permanent. It's important to note, too, that difficult experiences are not permanent either.

*(3:00 pause)*

We usually feel that external circumstances themselves are to blame for our unhappiness. If we reflect more carefully, however, we may see that it is primarily our afflictive emotional and behavioral reactions to circumstances that exacerbate our mental suffering. Recall a difficult situation you experienced recently – an argument, a disappointment, a loss. Take a moment to recall this situation in as much detail as possible. Notice how it feels in your body. Take time to recall your thoughts about this situation. What happened? What were your expectations? Were you expecting something that did not occur? Were you wishing for things to be a certain way? Wishing to avoid certain people or experiences? Was there part of you that engaged in self-criticism or self-doubt that may have exacerbated the situation? How did your thoughts about the situation affect your experience?

*(2:00 pause)*

Perhaps you were able to notice your reactions, and lessen your experience of suffering or stress. Recall these strategies you used. If you feel emotionally charged now, take a moment to reflect on the causes of suffering, and the ways in which we can contribute to our suffering. Try to release some of this unease and tension.

*(2:00 pause)*

Recognize that you can transform your mental patterns. Try to generate this thought as strongly as you can: “My unhealthy patterns can be transformed, and I have the potential to transform them. I resolve to transform my unhealthy emotional and behavioral patterns in order to emerge from suffering and realize my aspirations for happiness.”

*(2:00 pause)*

Now bring to your mind, as vividly as you can, three people. The first should be someone dear to you, someone you love and feel close to. This could be a family member or a close friend. Recall all the good qualities of this person. Notice how you feel.

*(0:30 pause)*

The second person should be someone you don't know so well, someone for whom you have no special sense of closeness or distance. Think of a real person you see often, maybe someone at a business you visit or someone at your workplace you have never spoken to. Notice how you feel when you think of this person.

*(0:30 pause)*

Finally, bring to mind someone you strongly dislike or who has done some harm to you. Notice how you feel when you think of this person.

*(0:30 pause)*

We may experience very difficult feelings towards each of these three people. Let's think more carefully about these reactions. These three categories of friend, enemy and stranger are superficial and changeable. We may have had friends that have become enemies, strangers that have become friends, and enemies that have become our closest support.

Think of your own experiences or examples from the larger world (e.g. national and political alliances; family situations, etc.).

*(1:00 pause)*

Moving beyond these superficial categories, let's try to relate to all three people from a broader perspective. As you look at each of them in turn, try to recognize that they all share a basic yearning to be happy and to be free from suffering, just like us. Allow this insight to sink into your heart.

*(1:00 pause)*

Now expand this insight gradually to include your immediate family and the people you interact with frequently, and then further, to eventually encompass all humanity. Fundamentally, in their aspiration to be free of problems and suffering, in desiring wellbeing and happiness, there is no difference among these people. Everyone, equally, wants to be happy and to be free from suffering. Sit with this awareness and let it sink into your heart.

*(1:00 pause)*

From this basis of equanimity, let's explore the incredible kindness of others. Every one of us knows someone whose kindness or generosity made a significant difference in our life. Bring this person to mind, and reflect on the many ways they have helped you. Allow gratitude to arise in your heart, and think of the ways you could repay such kindness.

*(1:00 pause)*

Now expand this awareness of the kindness of others by bringing to mind other people who have been helpful to you throughout the course of your life.

*(1:00 pause)*

Let's expand our gratitude beyond the people whose kindness we know about by reflecting on the countless others who benefit us every day in ways that we aren't aware of. As an example, take something simple that you usually take for granted, like the clothes you are wearing, and consider the enormous number of people who contributed to them: planting seeds, watering and tending plants, picking cotton, producing thread and cloth, and so on. Every piece of clothing is the product of an interdependent web, stretching infinitely; connecting us to many people we will never meet.

*(2:00 pause)*

Reflecting on our other accomplishments -- whether it's the ability to play a sport or an instrument, or whether it's education or work skills -- recognize that each of these has been made possible through the kindnesses of many others. Sit with this awareness and let it sink into your heart to allow appreciation and gratitude to arise. Think of how much you would like to repay the kindness of all these people.

*(1:00 pause)*

If you feel comfortable, expand your gratitude to someone who has been unkind to you. Try to focus on the good qualities of this person, and try to find some good that came out

of the situation: perhaps your ability to forgive or to see a kernel of truth in criticism; perhaps an ability to recognize how afflictive emotions cause a person to behave badly; or even the wisdom to be able to distinguish actors from their actions.

(1:00 pause)

Let's conclude the session by dedicating the positive effort of your practice to peace and wellbeing throughout the world. As you return to your daily routine, resolve to view your life through the lens of interconnectedness and to be grateful for the kindness of others.

*(0:15 pause)*

*(End of meditation: three chimes)*

### **Goals of practice**

Feelings of jealousy, rivalry and contempt lessen as the practitioner becomes aware of the ways that other people contribute to their own survival and success. Generating gratitude for the kindness of others, the meditator exhibits a spirit of reciprocity, becoming more helpful to others and more generous with his or her time and resources.

## **Week Six**

### **Developing Affection and Empathy**

#### **Pedagogical Material**

Affection – a deep feeling of endearment or tenderness towards others – is absolutely essential for the development of genuine compassion. The materials presented in the previous weeks led the student to develop appreciation and gratitude based on an understanding of interdependence and the benefits that one receives from others. That appreciation and gratitude enables one to relate to others with a sense of closeness and affection. Affection can be enhanced by repeated reflection on the kindness of others, as well as by reflecting on the many drawbacks of selfishness and the benefits of cherishing others. This reflection is most beneficial when it draws from multiple lines of reasoning, for example, that selfishness detracts from one's relationships, injures one's health, and destroys one's reputation. In short, just about every problem that one experiences, personally or in the broader society, is a result of one's own selfishness and lack of concern for others. On the other hand, cherishing others benefits both oneself and others. Those who genuinely like and care about others not only experience greater internal happiness, but also are surrounded by friends and enjoy better health. In our interconnected, globalized environment, the concept of “self” as distinct from “other” – autonomous, independent and unrelated – is an illusion. One's own interests are intertwined with every other being on this planet. The success and wellbeing of others is one's own success and leads to one's own wellbeing. Other's failures and suffering are equally one's own and lead to one's own suffering.

We want to emphasize here the qualities of the emotion with which we are working. “Affection” is being used as a translation of the Tibetan word *yid-'ong*, which refers to something that is beloved and pleasing to the mind, and incorporates a feeling of tenderness. A classic example is that of a mother looking at her child: no matter how objectively unattractive that child may be, it is beautiful to its mother, whose heart is moved by the appearance of her offspring.

Deep affection enhances empathy, which is the ability to recognize and be sensitive to the experiences of others, to both their joys and sorrows. The misfortunes of others are unbearable to one in the same degree that those others are dear to oneself. One cannot bear the suffering of friends and loved ones, but one often rejoices when viewing the suffering of enemies and feels indifference to the suffering of strangers. The reason for this is that one's friends are dear to one, and the dearer they are the more unbearable one finds their suffering. If the person is someone particularly cherished, then one finds even his or her slightest suffering is unbearable. One rejoices in the suffering of enemies because one has no affection for them, and the more one dislikes them, the more happiness one takes in their suffering. One lacks feelings of any kind for strangers, so we are indifferent to their experiences. The inability to bear the suffering of others is the impetus for compassion: just as one's own suffering is unbearable to oneself, and one therefore wants to be freed from it, so too one finds the suffering of others unbearable, and one wishes them to be freed as well.

It is important to note here that, at first, most people will experience some discomfort and fear when sharing in the suffering of others. Moreover, individuals who lack healthy self-confidence and weak personal boundaries might find it overwhelming to do so and

could thereby experience distress and anxiety. Those who have developed, to some degree, an experiential understanding of the temporary and changing nature of suffering as well as the self-confidence that they can overcome suffering and its causes will be able to transform empathy into the source of compassion. This is the reason for including the preliminary work in Week 2 on developing the participant's insights into his or her thoughts, emotions, and aspirations, and in Week 3 on self-compassion.

--makranksy meditation on suffering; connect to suffering of others

I used to work as a summer camp counselor in Michigan years ago. One of the things we taught our campers was that “**a bunch of twigs together are very hard or impossible to break**”. One alone doesn't stand a chance, as it is actually something very fragile. All of them together become very strong.

### **Key concepts**

developing affection and empathy; understanding the disadvantages of selfishness and the advantages of cherishing others.

### **Anchoring Quotes**

### **Sample Class Plan**

- Settling-in practice
- Discussion of home practice
- Pedagogy
  - Share Tania Singer's work on empathy (ability to down-regulate empathy for strangers and empathy; economic games in which we punish others we don't like)
  - Discuss mental and physical problems associated with loneliness; discuss our innate desire to connect
  - Discuss empathy and burnout. We need to know we can help or we will feel overwhelmed. Share some mentor practices (see Makranksy's *All You Need is Love* article in Tricycle) to help
  - Share the NYTimes Article, “Notes from a Dragon Mom”
  - Depending on the group, do an empathic listening exercise
- Meditation
- Discussion

### **Guided Meditation**

Begin by adjusting your posture so that you are comfortable, without any strain or tension in the body.

*(0:05 pause)*

Begin with three rounds of breathing. Breathe in and out, slowly and deeply, three times.

*(0:30 pause)*



Place your attention in the present moment by focusing on your breath. Rest your attention at your nostrils, as gently as a butterfly alighting on a flower. Using that as a reference point, attend to the unfolding sensations of each incoming and outgoing breath. Without forcing the breath in any way, simply maintain awareness of the incoming and outgoing breath. You want to maintain a balanced focus, neither concentrating too strongly on the breath nor relaxing so much that you lose track of it.

*(1:00 pause)*

Now let go of focusing on the breath and simply let your mind relax into its natural state. Whatever arises, just let it be without becoming involved with it.

*(2:00 pause)*

Reflecting on our own lives, recall our deepest wish for happiness. Recognize that others share this very same wish, yet like us, they mistakenly chase after or hold on to things which they believe will bring them happiness, but often mostly bring disappointment or dissatisfaction. Through deep reflection, we may come to see that suffering arises from our reactions to external circumstances. Recognizing this, we gain confidence in our ability to transform our reactions and reduce our suffering. Generating this confidence and determination, say to yourself: “I pledge to transform my negative emotions and actions so that I can realize my desire to be happy and free from suffering.”

*(2:00 pause)*

Now bring to your mind, as vividly as you can, the three people you have been working with: someone dear to you, someone you don't know so well, and someone you strongly dislike or who has done some harm to you. Don't just think about them in the abstract; try to picture them clearly. Notice how you feel as you bring each person to mind. Recall that the three categories of friend, enemy and stranger are superficial and changeable. Our own experience demonstrates that friends can become enemies, and strangers and enemies can become friends. Realize that each of the three people you are contemplating shares the basic yearning to be happy and to be free from suffering. Allow this insight to sink into your heart as you relate impartially to all three people.

*(2:00 pause)*

Now expand this insight gradually to include your immediate family and the people you interact with frequently, and then beyond, to eventually encompass all humanity. Fundamentally, in their aspiration to be free of problems and suffering, in desiring wellbeing and happiness, there is no difference among these people. Everyone, equally, wants to be happy and to be free from suffering.

*(1:00 pause)*

From this basis of equanimity, let's explore the incredible kindness of others. Think of someone whose kindness or generosity made a difference in your life. Bring this person to mind and reflect on the ways they helped you. Allow gratitude to arise in your heart.

*(1:00 pause)*

Reflecting on our own lives, so many of our accomplishments could not have been made if it were not for the kindness and generosity of others. Sit with this awareness and let it

fill your heart, allowing appreciation and gratitude to arise. Think of how it would feel to honor the kindness of all these people.

(2:00 pause)

Ultimately, we all depend on each other; we need each other. We clearly thrive and succeed when we cooperate and support each other, and cause each other suffering when we don't. If we think about ourselves, and all human beings in general, we may see all the goodness that comes from us being selfless, working together, cherishing each other. On the other hand, selfishness leads to hatred, arguments, and in a larger scale, to financial greed, wars, environmental degradation. Selfishness leads to isolation, which makes us more vulnerable to suffering, as we are inevitably interdependent. Let's spend a few moments thinking about how happiness for all comes from considering and cherishing others.

(1:00 pause)

Remembering how all your necessities, comforts and accomplishments come from the countless others who benefit you every day, reflect on the value of cherishing others. Allow affection and tenderness for others to develop; then sit with this awareness so that it sinks into your heart.

(1:00 pause)

Holding these countless beings in tenderness and affection, reflect upon their situation: despite their aspirations for happiness, they are deprived of genuine and abiding wellbeing. Despite their wish to be free from unhappiness, their lives are pervaded with suffering and dissatisfactions. Now focus this reflection on the person dearest to you. Bringing to mind the sorrows and dissatisfactions he or she experiences, feel how unbearable it is for you to witness this. Recognize and affirm their desire for happiness.

Now call to mind the stranger you have been working with. Consider the ways in which this person struggles and suffers. Just like us, this person longs to be happy, free from pain and suffering. Try to recognize their deep wish for happiness and affirm this. Try to hold them in tender awareness.

Now call to mind the difficult person you have been working with. Try to consider the ways in which this person wishes to be happy, yet suffers just like us. See if you can understand the ways in which their own ignorance contributes to their suffering and the suffering of others. Try to recognize and affirm their deep wish for happiness, and without forcing or faking it, try to hold them tenderly in your awareness.

(2:00 pause)

Let's conclude the session by dedicating the positive effort of your practice to peace and wellbeing throughout the world. As you return to your daily routine, resolve to remember

our interconnectedness and interdependence with others and cherish them for the many blessings they bring to our life.

*(0:15 pause)*

*(End of meditation: three chimes)*

**Goals of Practice**

The practitioner feels a greater sense of affection and cherishing for others and displays a greater sensitivity to and empathy for the misfortunes and happiness of others. Self-centered attitudes decrease, and there is a corresponding increase in altruism.

## **Week Seven**

### **Realizing Wishing and Aspiring Love and Compassion**

#### **Pedagogical Material**

The *lojong* tradition makes a distinction between affection and love. Affection is seen as a deep feeling of endearment or tenderness towards others, whereas love is the counterpart of compassion and refers to the wish for others to be happy. Compassion, on the other hand, is understood to be the wish for others to be free from suffering. Thus, love and compassion are regarded as two sides of the same coin. When a person develops a healthy sensitivity to or empathy for others, their suffering and lack of happiness becomes unbearable to witness. As a result of this empathic response, a spontaneous wish arises for others to have happiness and the conditions leading to happiness. This is love. At the same time, as a person becomes aware of how others are experiencing suffering and misfortunes, empathy also gives rise to the wish for them to be relieved of their suffering. This is compassion. In the beginning this thought is a mere wish, having the tone of “how nice it would be if others were happy and free from suffering.” We call this “wishing love” and “wishing compassion”. Further reflection deepens and reinforces this wish so that it becomes more spontaneous and profound, with an added sense of immediacy and urgency. This is the birth of “aspiring compassion”.

The key to generating compassion for people beyond one’s immediate circle of friends and loved ones is the ability to embrace an ever-widening circle of others with affection and tenderness, as instructed in the previous weeks. Through repeated contemplations utilizing analytical reasoning, the student participant cultivates an initial felt sense of love and compassion. After the feeling of love and compassion is generated, the student sits with the feeling, without further analysis, to infuse the mind with this feeling and integrate it completely within his or her experience.

#### **Key Concepts**

Realizing the distinction between affection and love; understanding affection and empathy as the keys to compassion; recognizing love and compassion as two sides of the same coin; progressing from wishing to aspiring compassion.

#### **Anchoring Quotes**

#### **Sample Class Plan**

- Settling-in
- Discussion
- Pedagogy
  - Reflection on others, especially difficult ones, as children. How can you connect with their suffering and relate to them?  
Consider how everyone we know was once an infant, a toddler, a child. There is no exception to this, even for adults who we consider annoying, unconscious, selfish, reprehensible, or even evil. No one started that way. In fact we all started the same way, emerging as

helpless blobs of flesh from 40 weeks growing within our biological mother's womb. That's everybody. All of us.

Since childhood is universal, perhaps we can imagine the world as a playground. Consider how you decide who to play with on this playground, who you "let onto" your playground on a daily basis. Some people are allowed, and others are not. We've been learning in past weeks how this selection process is arbitrary, how everyone is really on our playground all the time whether we notice it or not, and that the reasons for excluding people are arbitrary.

When we see others as part of a continuum, we can reduce our tendency to see them as fixed, unchanging, and "all-bad". Seeing vulnerability in others also taps our empathic response.

In the following visualization, we will try to see others as the children that they once were (and who says they are not now?). We will notice that in this process natural endearment can arise, and empathy, love, and compassion.

Practice: Observe the sequence of photographs on the next page, showing a child growing through their first 5 years. Look at each face, from youngest to oldest, considering for a few moments the expression in each image.

Now look from the last photo back to the first. This is the same person? How could this be? Yet there is a common reality here that we share, across all nations genders creeds etc.

Now close your eyes and imagine a stranger or difficult person in your life. See their face clearly, if you can, and then imagine them slowly shrinking, growing smaller and becoming children. Their wrinkles disappear, their hair is more full, or less grey, is longer or shorter (depending). Their eyes stay the same size, but their head gets smaller. Their body, arms and legs, are getting shorter, skinnier.

See them as they were at four years old. Imagine them in shorts, bare-footed, in a tank top, running across a field holding hands and giggling with friends. Imagine them swinging on the swing set at the playground, the look of elation as they slide down the slide.

Now imagine them even smaller, at 1 year old. They are as tall as your knees. They can only say a few words, like "Mama" or "More" or "Water". They can barely walk, and are thrilled when they can take a few steps, which they try to do over and over again, continuing to fall on their bottom and then pulling up again at the edge of the coffee table. Strangers who see them often stop to reflect back on the joy, the happiness, the radiant naiveté that they emanate. When scared or concerned, they crawl to their mother or father and climb into their lap for a hug.

Now imagine them getting smaller, as mere infants. They weigh 10 pounds, like a small watermelon, and have to be carried everywhere and cleaned up constantly as they dribble food and need their diaper changed. They don't even know they have arms or legs, which flail

about helplessly. The only way they communicate is through screaming, as loud as they can, until they get their needs met. Only through incredible amounts of effort by a number of care givers will this person even make it to the next day, much less the next week, the next month, the next year, the next decade.

Finally, allow this person to grow up again, becoming larger and larger to become their present self, filling their clothes back to their current size. They may look the same, but these are the same eyes, the same skin, growing from the same genetic blueprint, carrying the same continuum of awareness, which they have carried all their life.

Perhaps you can see that likeness of the child in the twinkle of their eye.

Now consider whether and how your reactions to this person may have changed.

### **Guided Meditation**

Begin by adjusting your posture so that you are comfortable, without any strain or tension in the body.

*(0:05 pause)*

Begin with three rounds of breathing. Breathe in and out, slowly and deeply, three times.

*(0:30 pause)*

Place your attention in the present moment by focusing on your breath. Rest your attention at your nostrils, as gently as a butterfly alighting on a flower. Using that as a reference point, attend to the unfolding sensations of each incoming and outgoing breath. Without forcing the breath in any way, simply maintain awareness of the incoming and outgoing breath. You want to maintain a balanced focus, neither concentrating too strongly on the breath nor relaxing so much that you lose track of it.

*(1:00 pause)*

Now let go of focusing on the breath and simply let your mind relax into its natural state. Whatever comes up, just let it be without becoming involved with it.

*(2:00 pause)*

Reflecting on our own lives, recall our deepest wish for happiness. Recognize that others share this very same wish, yet like us, they mistakenly chase after or hold on to things which they believe will bring them happiness, but often mostly bring disappointment or dissatisfaction. Through deep reflection, we may come to see that suffering arises from our reactions to external circumstances. Recognizing this, we gain confidence in our ability to transform our reactions and reduce our suffering. Generating this confidence and determination, say to yourself: “I pledge to transform my negative emotions and actions so that I can realize my desire to be happy and free from suffering.”

*(2:00 pause)*

Now bring to your mind, as vividly as you can, the three people you have been working with: someone dear to you, someone you don't know so well, and someone you strongly dislike or who has done some harm to you. Don't just think about them in the abstract; try to picture them clearly. Notice how you feel as you bring each person to mind. Recall that the three categories of friend, enemy and stranger are superficial and changeable. Our own experience demonstrates that friends can become enemies, and strangers and enemies can become friends. Realize that each of the three people you are contemplating shares the basic yearning to be happy and to be free from suffering. Allow this insight to sink into your heart as you relate impartially to all three people.

*(2:00 pause)*

Now expand this insight gradually to include your immediate family and the people you interact with frequently, and then beyond, to eventually encompass all humanity. Fundamentally, in their aspiration to be free of problems and suffering, in desiring wellbeing and happiness, there is no difference among these people. Everyone, equally, wants to be happy and to be free from suffering.

*(1:00 pause)*

From this basis of equanimity, let's explore the incredible kindness of others. Think of someone whose kindness or generosity made a difference in your life. Bring this person to mind and reflect on the ways they helped you. Allow gratitude to arise in your heart.

*(1:00 pause)*

Reflecting on our own lives, so many of our accomplishments could not have been made if it were not for the kindness and generosity of others. Sit with this awareness and let it fill your heart, allowing appreciation and gratitude to arise. Think of how it would feel to honor the kindness of all these people.

*(2:00 pause)*

Ultimately, we all depend on each other; we need each other. We clearly thrive and succeed when we cooperate and support each other, and cause each other suffering when we don't. If we think about ourselves, and all human beings in general, we may see all the goodness that comes from us being selfless, working together, cherishing each other. On the other hand, selfishness leads to hatred, arguments, and on a larger scale, to financial greed, wars, environmental degradation. Selfishness leads to isolation, which makes us more vulnerable to suffering, as we are inevitably interdependent. Let's spend a few moments thinking about how happiness for all comes from considering and cherishing others.

*(1:00 pause)*

Remembering how all your necessities, comforts and accomplishments come from the countless others who benefit you every day, reflect on the value of cherishing others. Allow affection and tenderness for others to develop; then sit with this awareness so that it sinks into your heart.

*(1:00 pause)*

Holding these countless beings in tenderness and affection, reflect upon their situation: despite their aspirations for happiness, they are deprived of genuine and abiding wellbeing. Despite their wish to be free from unhappiness, their lives are pervaded with suffering and dissatisfactions.

*(1:00 pause)*

Now focus this reflection on the person dearest to you. Think specifically of the many difficulties and suffering this person experiences – such as illness, fears, anxieties, disappointment – and his or her lack of genuine happiness. Let your heart resonate with the wish for this person to be free of suffering and to have happiness. Sit with this feeling and reflect, “How wonderful it would be for this person to be happy and free from suffering.”

*(1:00 pause)*

Now call to mind the stranger you have been working with. Think specifically of the many difficulties and suffering this person experiences – such as illness, fears, anxieties, disappointment – and his or her lack of genuine happiness. Let your heart resonate with the wish for this person to be free of suffering and to have happiness. Sit with this feeling and reflect, “How wonderful it would be for this person to be happy and free from suffering.”

*(1:00 pause)*

Now call to mind the difficult person you have been working with. Try to consider the ways in which this person wishes to be happy, yet suffers just like us. See if you can understand the ways in which their own ignorance contributes to their suffering and the suffering of others. Let your heart resonate with the wish for this person to be free of suffering and to have happiness. Sit with this feeling and reflect, “How wonderful it would be for this person to be happy and free from suffering.”

*(1:00 pause)*

Holding these beings in tenderness and affection, reflect upon their situation: despite their aspirations for happiness, they are deprived of genuine and abiding wellbeing. Despite their wish to be free from unhappiness, their lives are pervaded with suffering and dissatisfactions. Begin this reflection with the person dearest to you. Bringing to mind the sorrows and dissatisfactions he or she experiences, feel how unbearable it is for you to witness this. Continue with this reflection by expanding it to include other friends and loved ones, strangers, and even those whom you may have considered enemies.

*(2:00 pause)*

Holding this feeling, focus again on the person dearest to you. Think specifically of the many difficulties and suffering this person experiences – such as illness, fears, anxieties, disappointment – and his or her lack of genuine happiness. Let your heart resonate with the wish for this person to be free of suffering and to have happiness. Sit with this feeling and reflect, “How wonderful it would be for this person to be happy and free from suffering.”

*(4:00 pause)*



When you feel the impact of this experience, further reinforce it with a sense of greater urgency to see your dear one happy and free from suffering. Cultivate this urgency by thinking, “May this person be happy and be free from suffering.” Focus whole-heartedly on wanting him or her to be happy and free from suffering. Infuse your mind with these feelings, and integrate them completely with your experience.

*(4:00 pause)*

Continue with this reflection by expanding it to include other friends and loved ones, strangers, and even those whom you may have considered enemies, and eventually everyone in the world. Think of many difficulties and sufferings these people experience – such as illness, fears, anxieties, disappointment – and their lack of genuine happiness. Let your heart resonate with the wish for all these people to be free of suffering and to have happiness. Sit with this feeling and reflect, “How wonderful it would be for them to be happy and to be free from suffering.”

*(4:00 pause)*

When you feel the impact of this experience, further reinforce it with a sense of greater urgency to see all these people happy and free from suffering. Cultivate this urgency by thinking, “May every one of you be happy and be free from suffering.” Focus whole-heartedly on wanting all these people to be happy and free from suffering. Infuse your mind with these feelings, and integrate them completely with your experience.

*(4:00 pause)*

Let's conclude the session by dedicating the positive effort of your practice to peace and wellbeing throughout the world. Resolve to be more mindful of the needs and aspirations of others and to be kind to them.

*(0:15 pause)*

*(End of meditation: three chimes)*

### **Goals of Practice**

Building on affection and empathy, the meditator feels the need for all beings to be happy and free of suffering and wants to see them endowed with happiness and freedom from suffering.

## **Week Eight**

### **Realizing Engaged Love and Compassion**

#### **Pedagogical Material**

This final week incorporates all of the previous meditative exercises, leading the participant to the final goal: generating active love and compassion for others. Last week, we worked to develop a strong wish and then an aspiration for others to be happy and free from suffering. Now that practice is to be sustained, and the aspiration bolstered with more urgency, compelling the participant to personally intervene, to personally take responsibility for helping others achieve happiness. Instead of just wishing that others might be free of suffering and to have happiness, the meditator makes a commitment to become personally involved, to enhance others' well-being and ease their difficulties in any way possible. This is understood as “active”, or “engaged”, compassion.

The transition from wishing and aspiring compassion to engaged compassion does not require new material. Rather, with additional practice and deeper understanding, it naturally progresses, arising through repeated contemplation and meditation. Multiple lines of reasoning coupled with evidence from one's own successful practice will strengthen conviction in the drawbacks of selfishness and the benefits of cherishing others. As affection and empathy are enhanced, wishing and aspiring compassion become stronger and stronger, so that one moves beyond that mere wish and spontaneously wants to do something to help others.

It is possible that the student will feel that this practice is merely imaginary, and that nothing is actually being done to help others. At some level this is true. But the point here is to reinforce the desire to help others and then become mentally prepared to do so. Once the desire to help is deeply established in the spirit of sharing and giving, it is believed that a person will naturally and spontaneously do everything possible to help others.

#### **Key concepts**

Active and engaged love and compassion develops through sustained practice of wishing and aspirational love and compassion; the wish to help others develops into a firm commitment.

#### **Anchoring Quotes**

#### **Sample Class Plan**

\*In this final week, it can be helpful to review the eight-stages of the practice and offer resources for continued practice. You might also consider coordinating or suggesting a service project for this final session – it can help for people to feel a sense of giving back. Also take time for a thoughtful closing.

#### **Guided Meditation**

Begin by adjusting your posture so that you are comfortable, without any strain or tension in the body.

*(0:05 pause)*

Begin with three rounds of breathing. Breathe in and out, slowly and deeply, three times.

*(0:30 pause)*

Place your attention in the present moment by focusing on your breath. Rest your attention at your nostrils, as gently as a butterfly alighting on a flower. Using that as a reference point, attend to the unfolding sensations of each incoming and outgoing breath. Without forcing the breath in any way, simply maintain awareness of the incoming and outgoing breath. You want to maintain a balanced focus, neither concentrating too strongly on the breath nor relaxing so much that you lose track of it.

*(1:00 pause)*

Now let go of focusing on the breath and simply let your mind relax into its natural state. Whatever comes up, just let it be without becoming involved with it.

*(2:00 pause)*

Reflecting on our own lives, recall our deepest wish for happiness. Recognize that others share this very same wish, yet like us, they mistakenly chase after or hold on to things which they believe will bring them happiness, but often mostly bring disappointment or dissatisfaction. Through deep reflection, we may come to see that suffering arises from our reactions to external circumstances. Recognizing this, we gain confidence in our ability to transform our reactions and reduce our suffering. Generating this confidence and determination, say to yourself: “I pledge to transform my negative emotions and actions so that I can realize my desire to be happy and free from suffering.”

*(2:00 pause)*

Now bring to your mind, as vividly as you can, the three people you have been working with: someone dear to you, someone you don't know so well, and someone you strongly dislike or who has done some harm to you. Don't just think about them in the abstract; try to picture them clearly. Notice how you feel as you bring each person to mind. Recall that the three categories of friend, enemy and stranger are superficial and changeable. Our own experience demonstrates that friends can become enemies, and strangers and enemies can become friends. Realize that each of the three people you are contemplating shares the basic yearning to be happy and to be free from suffering. Allow this insight to sink into your heart as you relate impartially to all three people.

*(2:00 pause)*

Now expand this insight gradually to include your immediate family and the people you interact with frequently, and then beyond, to eventually encompass all humanity. Fundamentally, in their aspiration to be free of problems and suffering, in desiring wellbeing and happiness, there is no difference among these people. Everyone, equally, wants to be happy and to be free from suffering.

*(1:00 pause)*

From this basis of equanimity, let's explore the incredible kindness of others. Think of someone whose kindness or generosity made a difference in your life. Bring this person to mind and reflect on the ways they helped you. Allow gratitude to arise in your heart

*(1:00 pause)*

Reflecting on our own lives, so many of our accomplishments could not have been made if it were not for the kindness and generosity of others. Sit with this awareness and let it fill your heart, allowing appreciation and gratitude to arise. Think of how it would feel to honor the kindness of all these people.

(2:00 pause)

Ultimately, we all depend on each other; we need each other. We clearly thrive and succeed when we cooperate and support each other, and cause each other suffering when we don't. If we think about ourselves, and all human beings in general, we may see all the goodness that comes from us being selfless, working together, cherishing each other. On the other hand, selfishness leads to hatred, arguments, and on a larger scale, to financial greed, wars, environmental degradation. Selfishness leads to isolation, which makes us more vulnerable to suffering, as we are inevitably interdependent. Let's spend a few moments thinking about how happiness for all comes from considering and cherishing others.

(1:00 pause)

Remembering how all your necessities, comforts and accomplishments come from the countless others who benefit you every day, reflect on the value of cherishing others. Allow affection and tenderness for others to develop; then sit with this awareness so that it sinks into your heart.

(1:00 pause)

Holding these countless beings in tenderness and affection, reflect upon their situation: despite their aspirations for happiness, they are deprived of genuine and abiding wellbeing. Despite their wish to be free from unhappiness, their lives are pervaded with suffering and dissatisfactions.

(1:00 pause)

Now focus this reflection on the person dearest to you. Think specifically of the many difficulties and suffering this person experiences – such as illness, fears, anxieties, disappointment – and his or her lack of genuine happiness. Let your heart resonate with the wish for this person to be free of suffering and to have happiness. Sit with this feeling and reflect, “How wonderful it would be for this person to be happy and free from suffering.”

(1:00 pause)

Now call to mind the stranger you have been working with. Think specifically of the many difficulties and suffering this person experiences – such as illness, fears, anxieties, disappointment – and his or her lack of genuine happiness. Let your heart resonate with the wish for this person to be free of suffering and to have happiness. Sit with this feeling and reflect, “How wonderful it would be for this person to be happy and free from suffering.”

(1:00 pause)

Now call to mind the difficult person you have been working with. Try to consider the ways in which this person wishes to be happy, yet suffers just like us. See if you can understand the ways in which their own ignorance contributes to their suffering and the suffering of others. Let your heart resonate with the wish for this person to be free of suffering and to have happiness. Sit with this feeling and reflect, “How wonderful it would be for this person to be happy and free from suffering.”

*(1:00 pause)*

Holding these beings in tenderness and affection, reflect upon their situation: despite their aspirations for happiness, they are deprived of genuine and abiding wellbeing. Despite their wish to be free from unhappiness, their lives are pervaded with suffering and dissatisfactions. Begin this reflection with the person dearest to you. Bringing to mind the sorrows and dissatisfactions he or she experiences, feel how unbearable it is for you to witness this. Continue with this reflection by expanding it to include other friends and loved ones, strangers, and even those whom you may have considered enemies.

*(2:00 pause)*

Holding this feeling, focus again on the person dearest to you. Think specifically of the many difficulties and suffering this person experiences – such as illness, fears, anxieties, disappointment – and his or her lack of genuine happiness. Let your heart resonate with the wish for this person to be free of suffering and to have happiness. Sit with this feeling and reflect, “How wonderful it would be for this person to be happy and free from suffering.”

*(4:00 pause)*

When you feel the impact of this experience, further reinforce it with a sense of greater urgency to see your dear one happy and free from suffering. Cultivate this urgency by thinking, “May this person be happy and be free from suffering.” Focus whole-heartedly on wanting him or her to be happy and free from suffering. Infuse your mind with these feelings, and integrate them completely with your experience.

*(4:00 pause)*

Continue with this reflection by expanding it to include other friends and loved ones, strangers, and even those whom you may have considered enemies, and eventually everyone in the world. Think of the many difficulties and sufferings these people experience – such as illness, fears, anxieties, disappointment – and their lack of genuine happiness. Let your heart resonate with the wish for all these people to be free of suffering and to have happiness. Sit with this feeling and reflect, “How wonderful it would be for them to be happy and to be free from suffering.”

*(1:00 pause)*

As we sustain and deeply integrate this urgent wish for our dear one to be happy and to be relieved of suffering, arouse a deep resolve to personally help him or her. Maintain and reinforce this active compassion: “I must help you become free from your suffering and have happiness.” Accompany this resolve with the following visualization:

See the essence of your love and compassion as a pearl of white light at your heart. Let the light fill your body and mind and then emanate from you to the person in front of you, the light representing your love and compassion. Repeat to yourself: “I must help you become free from your suffering and have happiness.” As you say this, the light fills his or her entire body and mind, thereby eliminating all physical and mental sufferings and endowing your dear one with happiness and wellbeing. Sit with this, letting your resolve to help this person sink into your heart.

(4:00 pause)

Continue with this reflection by expanding it to include other friends and loved ones, to strangers, and even to those whom you may have considered enemies, and eventually to everyone in the world. Repeat to yourself: “I must help all beings become free from suffering and have happiness.” Let the light emanating from your heart gradually cover the entire world and spread to all the beings in it, permeating their bodies and minds, eliminating all of their physical and mental distress, and endowing them with happiness and well-being. Sit with this, letting your resolve to help all other beings sink into your heart.

(4:00 pause)

Let's conclude the session by dedicating the positive effort of your practice to peace and wellbeing throughout the world. Resolve to be as helpful as possible to others.

(0:15 pause)

*(End of meditation: three chimes)*

### **Goals of Practice**

When this training is successful, the meditator feels an enhanced connectedness to others and resolves to work actively to help them. Eventually this state of mind becomes ingrained and spontaneous, giving rise to genuine altruism.

## Further Steps

### *What to do after completing the CBCT program*

At the end of CBCT, participants often ask what they can do next to sustain or enhance their practice. Continuing with individual or group practice is essential. Each of the eight topics covered in the CBCT program are profoundly deep and can be explored throughout one's life. In a typical course, we may spend only one week covering that topic, but one could spend the entire course exploring a single topic and cultivating it through meditation practice. Therefore, a CBCT program can be seen as an introduction to these topics and the way they fit together for the cultivation of compassion. It provides a road-map that we can follow throughout the rest of our lives. It then falls on us to actually put what we have learned into practice, and cultivate these conditions that, when properly developed, will give rise to greater and greater compassion within us, with a corresponding effect on our own minds and bodies, and an effect on those we come into contact with.

Since CBCT is cognitively-based, it is based on the idea that if we can learn to see things from new perspectives that accord better with reality, this will have a transformative effect on our behavior and life. Therefore, learning is essential. The more we learn about meditation, compassion, empathy, and the nature of our minds, brains and bodies, the better equipped we are to bring about the transformation we seek. There are many resources out there, but for convenience we have listed a few of them, organized by topic, in the bibliography section at the end of this book.

### *Teacher Training*

Level One of the CBCT Teacher Training Program has three required components: a retreat, practicum and teaching-assistantship. In order to apply, interested participants must have:

- (1) attended the two CBCT Teacher Training weekend intensives at Drepung Loseling Monastery in January and February, 2011 or be enrolled in the upcoming eight-week CBCT course at Emory University;
- (2) been practicing meditation regularly for at least one year; and
- (3) attended at least one 7-day, teacher-led residential retreat.

### Level One Training Components

#### I. Retreat

This 9-day retreat, led by Geshe Lobsang Tenzin Negi, affords participants an opportunity to deepen their compassion meditation practice. The first five days of

the program will be devoted to intensive practice and reflection. The final four days will consist of workshops on the science of compassion and contemplative pedagogy.

## II. Practicum

The Practicum provides an opportunity for trainees to experience a CBCT program taught by CBCT instructors. As a participant/observer, trainees attend an eight-week long course at one of our sites and attend a three-hour seminar each week following the CBCT class to discuss pedagogy and practice. Trainees will be expected to develop a course syllabus as part of the practicum and lead their fellow participants in meditation practice. Trainees are also expected to complete assignments and reflections as well as a meditation practice journal in order to help strengthen their practice and teaching skills.

## III. Teaching Assistantship

Trainees will co-teach an eight-week course with one of our senior CBCT teachers. TAs will be required to keep a teaching journal and submit weekly class notes and reflections. TAs will receive feedback and guidance on teaching strategies and approaches.

*Research*  
XXX



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