

SUNLIGHT ON SHADOWS: Embracing Great Compassion

Meditation 30

Transforming Fear with Love

Having established pure motivation, bring to mind someone that you find it easy to access your love for. Make the aspiration that, whenever you're with this person, you're nothing other than a force of love for them.

If you have a practice of prayer, pray that this love be stabilized, strengthened, and grow until there are no more limitations. If you have any fear that comes up regarding that person, bring your love to that fear. Does it have the capacity to dispel that fear? If what you're afraid of were to happen—be it death, illness, separation—does that change the love? Does it change your commitment to or expression of love? Is the love reliable in the face of whatever that thing is? Alternate each of these contemplations with resting the mind.

Then think of others you love—members of your family, friends, or community. Think of each of them and how much you wish for their happiness and that you'd do whatever you could to bring that about. Think about their needs and wishes, and make the aspiration to grow your capacity to love, to bring them happiness, to be able to cultivate whatever's of greatest benefit to them. Make the commitment to make that quality of love and caring more accessible and more stable. Then rest the mind.

Pray that your capacity to grow your love might increase so it's equal to or greater than their need. Bring to mind your fears in relation to these people, your fear of their suffering. Practice maintaining your love in the face of that fear. Is that love stronger than the fear and the object of the fear? Is it reliable? If it feels less powerful than the fear or the object of fear, make a commitment to grow that love so it will be reliable in the face of whatever circumstances arise.

Then let the mind rest.

Think of others you don't know as well but that you deeply want nothing other than their welfare. Make the aspiration that their needs and wishes be fulfilled and that your own love become equal to or greater than their need. Commit to cultivate that quality of love, and pray for this to happen, alternating with resting the mind.

Think of others that your feelings are more neutral for. You may not feel an easily accessible love for them, but they also want to be happy and don't want to suffer. Wish that you could be the cause of their happiness. Make the commitment to practice so your love can deepen and grow to encompass

their needs and their aspirations—not just short-term but long-term—and pray that this be accomplished. Then rest the mind.

Include those you feel fear or aversion toward, who it's harder to generate love for. There's bias, judgment, and maybe righteousness. However, every one of those beings also wants to be happy, and not a single one wants to suffer. When we think of our love for others, this includes everybody, no matter their temporary choices. We want for them the causes and conditions of happiness and a deep fulfillment, and we pray we can offer that for them. Make the commitment to cultivate and grow your practice to make this possible, pray that it be so, and then rest the mind.

Keep expanding your visualization at your own pace to include more and more beings. When you bump up against any kind of resistance or hesitation about wanting their happiness, ask yourself if your hesitation is about them or about you. Are you hesitating to love them or to want their happiness, or is that hesitation about you wanting what you want and not wanting what you don't want?

Is it true you don't want them to be happy or, deep underneath all those layers of stuff, is there a wish for their fulfillment? Access that wish, and grow it. Make the aspiration that it only grow bigger and stronger, stabilize and deepen. Make a commitment to do the practice to make that possible. Pray that it be so, and then rest the mind. Keep expanding to include more and more beings until there's a sense of your love encompassing the scope of all beings, which is limitless, just like your love is limitless. Then, let the mind settle in the effortless experience of immeasurable love.

When you're aware of the fear you have in relation to all beings or particular categories of beings, look at what's stronger in your mind—the love or the fear. If your fear is stronger, ask yourself what would happen in your life, over time, if you keep giving in to the fear and if that's what you want to underlie your choices. Do you want your life to be informed by love or by fear? Then rest the mind.

When you allow yourself to deepen your love, does that diminish the fear? If you're able to sustain the love, does it allow you to keep going in the face of fear or fearful circumstances? Are you able to continue to love despite the fear? If not, make a commitment to continue to practice, to grow your capacity so that, over time, everything you do comes from love rather than fear, has the capacity to dispel the fear, allows you to be courageous and consistently responsive to the needs of beings. Then, let the mind rest.

Dedicate the merit of your practice with the aspiration that the virtue created be the cause of the happiness and welfare of all beings and of the capacity within yourself and all beings to actualize our limitless, immeasurable love.