

Meditation 31

Alternating Meditation on Compassion

We imagine ourselves in these circumstances until we have a vivid sense of that experience—what it would look, feel, and sound like. Then, we rest the mind and stop trying to generate these images and feelings and simply let our mind be with that experience. When the mind starts to ramble again, we return to thinking about how many beings are in that situation right this minute—how much suffering there is and how much we want to help.

This way, we become aware of the depth of our compassion—how, beneath all our layers of defenses, what we really want is for that suffering to end. Beneath the discouragement, the conceptualization, the habit to blame others for our problems; and beneath all the strategies, the despair, the sense of powerlessness and hopelessness lies the desire to end the suffering of beings. We let ourselves open to that depth of misery and become aware of the power of our compassion and our wish to do everything we can to uproot that suffering. Then we let go of the effort and rest in that pervasive experience of compassion.

When the thoughts and emotions begin to stir again—“There’s no way I can help,” or “The problem is so much bigger than me” or whatever they may be—we let the energy of compassion—which, by its nature, is expressive and dynamic—lead to a commitment. The nature of that commitment is different for each of us and may be different each time we do this meditation. It might be the inspiration to volunteer for or send a monthly donation to a humanitarian-aid or social-change organization, or it may be the inner commitment to continue to cultivate compassion so it overpowers any despair or sense of powerlessness. Whatever it is for each of us, it’s the dynamic expression of compassion that has the power to purify, cut through, and express itself for the benefit of others.

We let ourselves be aware of our commitment and again rest the mind, letting that commitment sink in and settle.

Then we may begin to wonder how we can uphold our commitment and find the strength and diligence to follow through. At this point, we pray to whosoever/whatsoever embodies limitless wisdom, loving kindness, and capacity to benefit that the compassionate, enlightened intention of their heart may awaken in us our own limitless, enlightened intention for the sake of all beings. We pray from the depth of our heart to have the capacity to uphold that commitment and, again, rest the mind.