

Laying a foundation for compassion and loving kindness Tonglen Meditation

Scriptural Perspective

The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,²³ gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.²⁴ Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.²⁵ Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.²⁶ Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other. Galatians 5:22-26

Make a tree good and its fruit will be good or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is recognized by its fruit. Matthew 12:33

Walk as children of light for the fruit of the Spirit *is* in all goodness, righteousness, and truth). Ephesians 5:8

I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing John 15: 5

Love... always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. 1Corinthians 13:7

What is Tonglen Meditation?

Tonglen is an ancient form of meditation that focuses on compassion: connecting with it, developing it, and learning how to apply it in everyday life.

Compassion is not simply a sense of sympathy or caring of the heart, or a sharp clarity of recognition of needs and pain. It is a sustained and practical determination to help alleviate suffering.

In the Tonglen practice of giving and receiving, we take on, through compassion, all the various mental and physical sufferings of all beings: their fear, frustration, pain, anger, guilt, bitterness, doubt, and rage, and we give them, through love, all our happiness, and well-being, peace of mind, healing, and fulfillment.

The practice centers on imagining that as we inhale, we are taking in the darkness of suffering and its causes. As we exhale, we are sharing the light of well-being and its causes with the one who needs it.

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Based on contemplation, meditation, and active compassion, this spiritual path trains the mind to be more empathetic and awake.

The Practice

- ❖ Before you begin with this practice, sit quietly and meditate deeply on compassion
- ❖ Pray for inspiration and blessing, that compassion may be born in your heart
- ❖ Imagine in front of you, as vividly and as poignantly as possible, someone you care for who is suffering. Try and imagine every aspect of the person's pain and distress. Then as you feel your heart opening in compassion toward the person, imagine that all his or her sufferings manifest together
- ❖ Imagine as you inhale, the smoky darkness of negativity and suffering; allowing it to enter your heart where it will be transformed into light
- ❖ As you breathe out, your affectionate heart radiates soothing, gentle light beams that touch, reassure, and comfort. Imagine that you are sending out a brilliant, cooling light of peace, joy, happiness, and ultimate well-being and that its rays are purifying all the associated negativity and pain. You relieve the darkness of distress and its causes, and share the light of freedom, of well-being and its causes, with yourself and everyone who needs it
- ❖ Extend your meditation to yourself and others where they are spiritually or emotionally stuck. Breathe in the darkness of their distress; breathe out the light of freedom and peace. Imagine their relief and allow it to touch your heart.
- ❖ Imagine that your compassion is a wish-fulfilling jewel with the inherent power to give precisely to each being what they most need to alleviate suffering, and bring about true fulfillment.
- ❖ As the light of your compassion streams out to touch the pain, it is essential to feel a firm conviction that all negativity has been purified, and to feel a deep lasting joy that the grip of suffering and pain has been released. Then, as you go on breathing normally, in and out, continue steadily with this practice.