



Today's heart meditation will be another version of compassion practice, what I've come to call the reign of compassion. And I think probably the most beautiful way I know to begin is to simply sense your own intention, to experience this heart in its full capacity, to experience the awakened heart of compassion.

As a way of leading in, we'll begin with what is called in the Taoist and Buddhist traditions a smile down, is to create the maximum receptivity and openness in a very physical cellular way. And that starts with actually imagining the sky, sensing a great openness extending in all directions and sensing the curve and spirit of a smile filling the sky. As much as possible to visualize that and then sense that openness of sky filling the mind and that that curve of a smile spreading through the mind. Connecting with openness, availability, possibility, letting the curve of a smile spread through the eyes. You can sense the corners of the eyes uplifted a bit, the outer corners. Softening the eyes allowing the brow to be smooth. Relaxing the jaw, sensing a slight smile at the mouth. See if you can sense the inside of the mouth smiling. The eyes are smiling. The mouth. You might feel the throat and feel the throat as you breathe in and out and again sense right there that same curve and openness of a smile.

And then imagining that you can smile into the heart, sensing the curve a smile spreading through the heart and chest area. Sensing it emerging, the smile emerging from inside out, a natural openness in space, that doesn't cover over what's happening for you right now but rather makes room. Eyes are smiling and the mouth, throat, the heart. And see if you can loosen the belly and feel the breath receive deep in the torso. Imagine and sense the same smile spreading through the belly and of openness at the Dantian, that area right beneath the belly.

Sensing an openness and ease down through the hips and the legs right into the feet. Up through the chest. Sensing space open up in a way that you can allow whatever might be tense or tight in the body to loosen and let go some.

Resting in a natural receptivity or relaxed attentiveness. The rain of compassion begins with just sensing in your life, as you're experiencing life today, whatever issues or situations are activating you, whatever you think needs and wants attention in your life that trips off a kind of painful reactivity and suffering. That can be the place you bring this meditation to today. So, you may take a few moments and just sense what naturally comes to consciousness. Some difficult situation, some place where you might contract into selfing and into not liking the self perhaps, where you might feel caught in fear, some place where you might be caught in some sense of grief, anger, hurt, whatever you sense wants attention.



This might be a situation in your life that involves another person, a conflict. Might be a situation at work, might be something to do with your health. As you let yourself settle on something to work with, you might let the situation be a front and center in your attention. So this is an invitation to actually let the story be there. Let the triggers, if it's another person involved, you might see the person's face or hear the conversation or words that might set you off. If it's something you're anticipating it's going to happen, you might let yourself see that in your mind's eye. In other words, as if you're running a movie of this story in your mind, stop at the frame that is most evocative, that most upsets or disturbs or triggers you.

And when you get there, freeze the frame and begin rain with just recognizing, OK this is part of the experience of my life right now. In other words, honestly acknowledge the actuality, this is a part of my life. And see if this pause right now can be part of just allowing it to be there, a willingness not to try to get rid of anything or change anything right now. The beginning of rain is just recognizing and agreeing to be with. Just letting something be.

Buddhist teacher, Ajahn Sumedho, puts it like this. He says, "When these circumstances arise and we sense what's triggered, if we can just say, it's like this. It's like this. That's the beginning of a healing presence." So for now, just to recognize and allow what's there to be there. And then with the quality of interest and kindness, we begin to investigate. You might sense first really what has triggered? What's going on inside me right now? What's it like? Perhaps you're noting an emotion of anger or fear or hurt or maybe you have a swirl of thoughts about the situation. Just notice what it's like.

As you investigate what it's like inside, if it's helpful for you to have your hand on your heart as a way of reminding yourself of this investigating with kindness, please explore that. And I'll make some suggestions on how you might investigate, but feel free to go down whatever track feels most alive for you. Or some people right from the start, just sensing, what am I believing? What am I believing when this is going on? Am I believing that this means I'm a bad person? Am I believing that I'm failing? Am I believing my life will never work out the way I want it to be? Am I believing another person doesn't really care about me? Am I believing I'm basically broken? Am I believing I'm unlovable? These are just some core beliefs that are often there. But not to dig on the beliefs because that can get very mental. Just to sense if one's right there. And then to go right to the body and sense, how does this live in my body, this belief? When I'm believing this? What's it like inside my body? And just scan through, feel the throat, the chest, the belly, those are the most common areas where we can get a felt sense of our experience. I'm believing it will never be different. I'll always be like this. I'll never be happy. What's that like in the body?



Sensing the worst part of this. What's the worst part of this? What are you really afraid of? Letting that sense of, what's the worst part be felt. Sometimes letting the face express the feelings gets you more in touch. If you're feeling anger or sadness or disgust or whatever just to let the face express it. Aversion, craving, and then come back and feel it more fully in the body again. Can you sense where the most reactive part of you, where the felt sense that the strongest lives in your body? Can you sense where that is?

See if it's possible to go right inside the part of you that's most reactive, most hurt, angry, afraid, and look at the world through its eyes. Take the shape of that part of you. Feel it from the inside out and sense, what is this part most wanting? Slightly different question, what is this part most needing? Sometimes the part will say it in words and if there's words you might hear the words a few times around. Or it might be an image, felt sense.

Since the possibility of widening out your attention again so you're floating larger than just that part. So that you're occupying as much space as you can imagine. If you could now listen to and feel from the highest most awake part of your own being to this suffering part. What does this part most need? Is it possible to recognize this part is suffering just in a very pure way? Oh, this is suffering. And offer in some way what this part of you most needs in this moment.

For some, you might change and soften the touch a bit. Make sure that your touch and your own heart is tender and light or you might be touching your cheek or your belly, communicating through that touch. What are the words or the touch or the message, the image, that will most meet the needs of this part of you? What would be most healing and freeing? Some of the classic words are, I care about this suffering. I am sorry and I love you. Experiment seeing what can be offered through touch, through word, through image. And if it's difficult to sense yourself offering from your high self to this part, what's needed, to imagine that behind and around you is the Awakened Heart Mind of the Buddha, the Bodhisattva, some being that you truly trust, mother or grandmother, a father, a child, but some pure, wise, compassionate, being, and sense what that being might be able to offer, express, to this place in your that would be healing.

From the teachings of Bapuji, we get the message, break your heart no longer. Each time you judge yourself, you break your heart. You pull away from the love that is the wellspring of your vitality. But now the time has come, your time, to live and trust the goodness that you are. Your true essence is pure awareness, aliveness, love. Let no one, no idea or ideal obscure this truth. If one comes, forgive it for its unknowing. Just let go and breathe into the goodness that you are.

Exploring what it means to truly offer loving presence to the life within you. Could be imagining it as an embrace as if you're holding a child, a bathing with light and warmth. Whatever connects you with that sense of cherishing this life right here.



As you sense this loving presence holding the life within, you might explore or investigate who am I in this moment when there's love holding this life? And then just rest. That's the "N" of RAIN, a natural awareness.

The heart of Buddhist practice is compassion and the heart of compassion is compassion to the life that's right here. And there's a natural widening that unfolds when we open our heart in that way. So, we'll explore that widening by now inviting to mind someone in our lives that we care about that's having a hard time.

This is a beautiful opportunity to bring your healing energy and your consciousness to someone you care about. And in the same way you had a situation in your life that you just recognize and allow, just sense the circumstances of this person's life. The ones that are causing difficulty and just acknowledge. Recognize and allow, so, this is what's true for this person. This is how it is.

You're letting be. And in this space of letting be, you can begin to bring that person close in in your awareness. Like imagine that person right here so you could sense his or her presence and sense what's really going on more closely. We begin the investigation with kindness. That if you could look through this person's eyes at the world, feel with this person's body and heart, what will be the worst part of what this time is for him or her?

What's the fear or doubt this person's living with? The hurt, the pain from the inside out, just to sense what it might be like. Sometimes in the Tonglen compassion practice, we use the breath to help with that. You might breathe in and feel that you're letting yourself be touched and touch this person suffering. Touch the loneliness, the fear, the doubt, the hurt. And with the out breath, you're letting that hurt and pain be held in the vastness of loving presence. So, it's not a self that's holding it right now. You're letting yourself be touched, truly touched and you're letting it be held in what's in actuality the space of awareness.

As you breathe for this person and touch the suffering, sense what this person most needs. What at the very core of that suffering is most needed? What's the understanding or the experience? Perhaps to be loved, to be seen, to feel held. What is it? So, you continue to breathe for this person. Sense him or her in your heart and that you could offer the wisdom, the love, the presence that's most needed.

Widening out even further to sense that you're breathing for all beings that are struggling, yourself and all those in this room and all beings everywhere. That you're breathing in and letting yourself be touched by the truth of suffering and you're breathing out and sensing that that suffering is held in a boundless presence, a boundless space of compassion.



Relaxing any focus on the in breath or out breath or any concept or idea and just sensing that you can merge with that vastness, that that space of compassionate presence is your own heart essence. Resting in this and in these moments of silence, letting whatever arises be touched with the heart of compassion.

From the radiant sutras, there is a place in the heart where everything meets. Go there if you want to find me. Mind, senses, soul, eternity, all are there. Are you there? Enter the bowl of vastness that is the heart. Give yourself to it with total abandon. Quiet ecstasy is there and a steady regal sense of resting in a perfect spot. Once you know the way, the nature of attention will call you to return again and again and be saturated with knowing I belong here. I am at home here.

Namaste. Thank you.