

Joy Practice

Compassion Meditation

Joy Practices from the Book of Joy, conversations between the Dalai Lama and Archbishop Desmond Tutu

There is probably no word that the Dalai Lama and the Archbishop use more when describing the qualities worth cultivating than compassion. In short, the Dalai Lama feels that educating our children to have more compassion is the single most important thing we can do to transform the world, but we do not need to wait for the next generation to grow up before we can start to experience the benefits of compassion. Indeed, cultivating compassion for even ten minutes a day, the Dalai Lama said, can lead to twenty-four hours of joy. Expanding our circle of concern is essential for both our well-being as well as that of our world.

The following practice is adapted from the Compassion Cultivation Training program.

1. Find a comfortable sitting position.
2. Take several long breaths through your nose and follow this with a minute or two of breath-awareness meditation.
3. Think of someone you love very much, a relative or a friend or even a pet. Try to either see their face in your mind's eye or feel their presence, and notice how your heart feels when you think of them.
4. Feel whatever arises. If you feel warmth, tenderness, or affection, stay with these feelings. If not, just stay with the thought of your loved one.
5. Silently say the following lines:
 - May you be free from suffering
 - May you be healthy
 - May you be happy
 - May you find peace and joy.
6. Breathe in, and as you breathe out, imagine a warm light coming from the center of your heart, carrying your love to your loved one, and bringing them peace and joy.
7. Rejoice in the thought of your loved one's happiness for a minute or more.

8. Remember when this person was having a difficult time.
9. Notice what it feels like to experience their pain. Does your heart ache? Do you have a feeling of unease in your stomach? Or a desire to help? Simply notice the feelings and stay with them.

10. Silently offer the following phrases:

- May you be free from suffering.
- May you be healthy.
- May you be happy.
- May you find peace and joy.

Imagine that a warm light emerges from the center of your heart and touches the person you have in mind, easing their suffering. Finish with this heartfelt wish that they be free from suffering.

11. Think of a time when you experienced great difficulty and suffering-when you were a child, or perhaps even now.

12. Place your hand on your heart and notice feelings of warmth, tenderness, and caring for yourself.

13. Reflect on the fact that just like all people, you want to be happy and free from suffering.

14. Silently offer the following phrases:

- May I be free from suffering.
- May I be healthy.
- May I be happy.
- May I find peace and joy.

15. Imagine someone you neither like or dislike, someone you might see frequently at work or the store or the gym but do not have a strong positive or negative feeling toward.

16. Reflect on that fact that just like all people, these persons want to be happy and free from suffering.

17. Imagine them being faced with suffering and experiencing despair or grief. Allow your heart to feel warmth, tenderness, and caring for them and an urge to help them.

18. Now silently offer the following phrases:

- May you be free from suffering.
- May you be healthy
- May you be happy.
- May you find peace and joy.

19. Reflect on the fact that everyone on the planet has the fundamental desire to be happy and be free of suffering.

20. Fill your heart with the desire that all be free of suffering, perhaps even someone with whom you have a difficult relationship, and silently repeat these phrases:

- May all beings free from suffering.
- May all beings healthy.
- May all beings be happy.
- May all beings find peace and joy.

21. Allow your feelings of compassion and concern to fill your heart, and feel the warmth, tenderness, and caring. Radiate this feeling of compassion out to the world.