**Self- compassion/Compassion Meditation**

Beginning by setting your intention to allow whatever arises and to remain present with it.

Envisioning yourself in a safe space. Feeling comfortable where you are. Remembering that if anything comes up that you do not feel able to handle in that moment, you may simply return to your breath, or an external object such as sounds.

Taking a few breaths and sensing into the entire body.

Feeling any physical sensations that are present in the body.

Noticing any areas in the body where there is tension or discomfort. If you have any, where is it located? Your stomach, chest, neck, or head?

Placing your awareness within the tension, experiencing it, and inhabiting it from within.

Perhaps noticing how, by noticing and sensing the tension from within, that it softens or dissolves somewhat, or perhaps entirely.

PAUSE

Connecting awareness with the earth beneath you. As you are sitting present in the body, sensing the earth under you. Feeling yourself resting on the earth. Feeling how the earth is supporting the body.

On the in-breath, feeling the entire body, and sensing into whatever tension is presenting itself. On the out-breath, releasing the tension down into the earth.

Doing this a few times.

PAUSE

Focusing attention in the heart area and seeing if you are carrying any emotional distress. If so, what is it quality? Does it feel hard or turbulent, rough or heavy? How does it appear in the mind? Is it dark or grey, or murky? Getting a sense of the discomfort so that you can clearly identify it. Perhaps giving it a label such as pain, worry or anxiety.

PAUSE

Connecting with a sense of inner compassion. To do so, you might try bringing your attention to the softness of your heartbeat or resting in your heart space or the chest area, anything that helps you feel tender in an energized and interconnected sense.

PAUSE

Bringing your awareness back to your breath, and as you inhale, visualizing your breath going directly to the place where the discomfort or tension resides. On every in-breath drawing the breath into the discomfort. In-haling directly into the tension wherever it is located in the body.

Visualizing the tension in your body on the inhale.

Imagine the discomfort is being transformed in the gap between the in-breath and the out-breath – that the distress is being transformed by the light of your awareness, by the inner sense of self-compassion.

Visualizing the tension in the body being released on the exhale.

PAUSE

In a state of open awareness and compassion, this negativity will have nowhere to “stick” in the body. Allowing it to be processed and transformed.

As you exhale, imagining that you are breathing out softness and smoothness. Letting your outbreath be the opposite of your inbreath. Breathing in tightness and heaviness and breathing out light and softness.

If your mind wanders, come back to your breath and the textural rhythm of giving and taking.

PAUSE

Feeling free to take more than one breath to inhale tension and discomfort or to exhale softness and release, until you get the hang of it. Gradually settling into a natural rhythm, breathing in your distress and breathing out well-being.

PAUSE

Now as you continue with this cycle of inhaling and exhaling suffering and relief, begin to visualize suffering beyond yourself.

You might expand spatially, outwardly from your body: loved ones, people in your neighborhood, in your city, and so on. You could also expand to particular groups of people who may be suffering, such as your family, a particular community, or an oppressed group.

Whichever way you choose, allow the size of the group to gradually expand until you are taking in suffering from any and all directions, and breathing out healing and relief in all directions as well.

PAUSE

Now returning to resting in open awareness. Following the breath and on the exhale, release any tension that may have arisen during the meditation.

Continuing with a few deep breaths or even sighs if it feels good to do so. Relaxing and letting go, arriving in the present moment. Allowing your entire internal experience to be just as it is.

**TALK: What is Self-compassion**

In buddhism compassion is liberative action to relieve suffering. metta is a disposition, an interior attitude. So, what we are talking about is really self-love or boundless kindness towards oneself.

Self-compassion involves acting the same way towards yourself as you would others, when you are having a difficult time, fail, or notice something you don’t like about yourself.

Instead of just ignoring your pain with a “stiff upper lip” mentality, you stop to tell yourself “this is really difficult right now,” how can I comfort and care for myself in this moment?

Three components (Neff)

1. Self-kindness vs. self judgement
2. Common humanity vs. isolation
3. Mindfulness vs. identification

**Self-kindness**

being warm and understanding toward ourselves when we suffer, fail, or feel inadequate.

tendency to judge ourselves.

When things don’t go the way we want, we suffer stress and self-criticism

When we can accept things as they are with kindness and understanding, equanimity arises

Play the fly video

**Common Humanity**

In my practice of self-love this week, I noticed that the 1st NT is central. Knowing that all beings, including ourselves suffer. It is part of being human – releases the self judgement, shame and fear around our own suffering. With this self-love can emerge and sustain.

Sometimes we can think that I am the only person suffering or making mistakes.

Self-compassion recognizes that all humans suffer and make mistakes.

The very definition of being “human” means that one is mortal, vulnerable and imperfect. Therefore, self-compassion involves recognizing that suffering and personal inadequacy is part of the shared human experience

It is something we all go through as humans and not something that only happens to “me”

**Mindfulness vs. ID**

With M we can place our situation with a larger perspective.

observe our negative thoughts and emotions with openness and clarity, so that they are held in mindful awareness.

We observe and not suppress or deny

We must allow our pain in order to feel compassion for it.

mindfulness requires that we not be “over-identified” with thoughts and feelings, so that we are caught up and swept away by negative reactivity.

When we are ID with the egoic mind, we will suffer. The ego is inadequate. By its very nature it is limited and finite. So if we ID with it, we feel inadequate. Our true nature is limitless and infinite.

PLAY Jack Kornfield video clip.

QUESTION: How is self-esteem and self-compassion different

SE – based on comparison with others. May lead us to put others down in order to feel better about ourselves.

The need for high self-esteem may encourage us to ignore, distort or hide personal shortcomings

Self-esteem is often contingent on our latest success or failure, meaning that our self-esteem fluctuates depending on ever-changing circumstances

self-compassion is not based on self-evaluations or comparison

you don’t have to feel better than others to feel good about yourself.

personal failings can be acknowledged with kindness and do not need to be hidden.

self-compassion isn’t dependent on external circumstances

**What the Buddha Taught**

The Buddha taught that to realize enlightenment, a person must develop two qualities: wisdom and compassion. Wings of bird

some westerners are confused about compassion. tell me that while they think it’s good to have compassion for others it’s not desirable or even possible to have self-compassion, or that self-compassion is just self-pity.

Not surprising – Buddha just assumed we loved ourselves. He said we should love others as we love ourselves.

Notion of self-hatred not on his radar. Dali Lama story.

there’s little to nothing in the Buddhist scriptures about the practice of self-compassion or self-metta.

I have noticed in my personal experience that Judeo-Christian countries seem to have a more of tendency toward self-hatred than Eastern spiritual countries.

QUESTION: WHY DO YOU THINK THIS IS THE CASE?

Even this quote which is often attributed to the Buddha, is not an actual quote – yes there are fake Buddha quotes: “You, yourself, as much as anybody in the entire universe, deserve your love and affection.

The general assumption that we are dear to ourselves and need to extend that care to others can be seen very explicitly in this verse that the Buddha uttered to King Pasenadi and Queen Mallikā:

“Searching all directions

with your awareness,

you find no one dearer

than yourself.

In the same way, others

are dear to themselves.

So you shouldn’t hurt others

if you love yourself.

And it is implied in all the practices.

So when the Buddha says something like:

“You should train yourself thus … ‘I shall remain friendly and empathetic, with a mind of lovingkindness, and I shall not give in to hatred,'”

this is as applicable to ourselves as it is to others.

**What is Compassion**

In west, we often think of wisdom as something intellectual and compassion as something emotional. This is not the case.

Karuna translated as "compassion" is karuna, - In practice, prajna gives rise to karuna, and karuna gives rise to prajna. Truly, you can't have one without the other. They are a means to realizing enlightenment, and they are also enlightenment manifested.

Compassion is defined as “the heart which trembles in response to pain” or the capacity to feel with.

It is an active sympathy or a willingness to bear the pain of others.

distinction must be made between metta and karunaa. both are brahma-viharas. metta is a disposition, an interior attitude. Karunaa is more than this. It is liberative action which seeks to relieve the suffering of others

What does being nice to others have to do with enlightenment? For one thing, it helps us realize that the "individual me" and "individual you" are mistaken ideas. And as long as we're stuck in the idea of "what's in it for me?" we are not yet wise.

Greatest gift you can offer or receive.

Imagine what a difference it would make to your life to engage the world with a conscious commitment to end sorrow and pain wherever you meet It.

Easier to be compassionate when you meet a child dying of cancer or a car accident victim – heart opens with natural spontaneous compassion.

What about someone that is dying from cirrhosis of the liver due to drinking or someone imprisoned for murder or someone that hurt you?

The practice is to nurture a heart without boundaries. That takes profound courage, receptivity and understanding.

Shantideva taught that it is our enemies that awaken our hearts.

**How to Cultivate Compassion**

No need to be perfect to be compassionate.

Willingness to embrace all those moments of resistance and judgement.

Listen to yourself when you feel most afraid or resentful.

Forerunner to be able to extend compassion without conditions to others.

Pema Chodron said, "In order to have **compassion** for others, we have to have **compassion** for ourselves."

**Jeff Foster - if abandonment is the core wound**  
if abandonment is the core wound  
the disconnection from mother  
the loss of wholeness  
then the most potent medicine  
is this ancient commitment  
to never abandon yourself  
to discover wholeness in the whole-mess  
to be a loving mother to your insides  
to hold the broken bits  
in open awareness  
to illuminate the sore places  
with the light  
of love

Their fear and confusion no different from yours.

Self-improvement is an endless project; it is an expression of judgments about yourself and where you deny compassion toward yourself.

Self-compassion entails being warm towards oneself when encountering pain and personal shortcomings, rather than ignoring them or hurting oneself with self-criticism.

Self-compassion means you are kind and understanding when confronted with perceived personal failures.

Self-compassion entails being warm and understanding toward ourselves when we suffer, fail, or feel inadequate, rather than ignoring our pain or flagellating ourselves with self-criticism.

self-compassion involves recognizing that suffering and personal inadequacy is part of the shared human experience – something that we all go through rather than being something that happens to “me” alone.

Accept moments of anger and fear as guests. Acceptance – allow to rise and fall without identifying with them or acting on them.

For compassion to make a difference it must be embodied.

Christ welcomed outcasts and those that where disdained by others.

“this too”, this too” is the essence of compassion.

We are asked over and over to find the strength to open when we are most inclined to shut down.

It is not a feeling. It is a response to pain that is rooted in wisdom.

Vow to alleviate suffering and the cause of suffering in all its forms.

As long as we deny suffering, our capacity to experience intimacy with life and happiness will be limited.

Compassion arises when we see the interconnectedness of everything. When you wake up from the story of “me:. Also realize that they are not their story either.

**STORY** I saw the Dalai Lama address 20,000 in Ottawa. He said very beautifully that we've come to a time when the interconnected nature of the world is more readily apparent, and that we can't deny it. If you fight your neighbor, you are fighting yourself, and if you destroy your neighbor, you are destroying yourself. We are all linked, and compassion is the natural response of seeing that linkage. It is caring and concern rather than a feeling of separation into us and them. We now have an opportunity to see the interconnected nature of things.

**Emptiness, Not-Self and Compassion**

The emptiness of the Heart Sutra isn’t the emptiness of despair; it’s the emptiness of all limitation and boundary. It is open, released.

When I am bound as a separate self, and others are bound as a separate self, I need to protect myself from them.

When no boundary - when it turns out that I literally am others and others literally are me—then love and connection is easy and natural.

This is why the emptiness teaching of the Heart Sutra is the necessary basis for compassion.

Compassion as transaction—me over here, being compassionate to you over there—is simply too exhausting, cumbersome and difficult.

If I see the boundarylessness of me and you, that your suffering is my suffering then it is easy to be compassionate without lim it .