

Compassion

By Debbie Homewood

What is Compassion? First and foremost, Compassion is the power to transform - to transform suffering, powerlessness, isolation and fear.

Compassion is a quality of loving kindness that is the tender acceptance of even that which might otherwise seem unacceptable. It is a respectful, kind understanding of suffering - a soft, gentle appreciation of pain.

Compassion comes from the **HEART, not the head**. We have two centres of intelligence – intellectual and emotional. We call the emotional centre of intelligence the heart. It has resources and abilities the intellect does not have and is a great source of inner strength, where we find courage, compassion, patience, empathy, and an ability to cope with the otherwise unbearable, including grief.

Learning to connect with your heart and access compassion is one of the most important, empowering, healing and life-giving gifts we can give our self and others. The simple technique which follows is very effective in connecting you to your heart.

Inspired by the teachings of Stephen Levine, Joan Halifax and many others, Connecting to Your Heart, takes through a gentle but powerful process to connect with your Heart Centre, the seat of your emotional and spiritual intelligence. Our intellect is not good at dealing with fear, sadness, grief or anxiety. As we learn to connect with your heart we find there the inner strength to approach and eventually transform these otherwise unbearable experiences. This gentle but empowering technique which embraces mindfulness, compassion and presence helps you to find peace and your path through your suffering.

The deceptive thing about compassion is that although it seems simple, it is so very powerful.

Connecting With Your Heart Technique

Find a comfortable position, either sitting or lying down.

Take a moment to relax your face, your neck, your shoulders, and your tummy.

Focus all of your awareness on your breath. Just pay attention to your breathing. Feel your breath coming into your body. Feel your body expanding to make room for the breath. Feel your breath coming out again.

As you pay attention to your breath, follow your breath down into your body. With each breath let your awareness go with your breath down into your body.

Find your heart centre, down in your body. Feel where it is. Now breathe right to that place and focus all your attention of breathing into your heart centre.

Use your breath to breathe warmth, or light, or energy into your heart centre. As you do, feel it expand and spread out into your body a little more.

When you are ready you can then let a question, or a memory, or a person, or a feeling come into your awareness and use your breath to breathe that into your heart centre. Let your awareness focus on whatever it is you want to take into your heart centre and place that on your breath so that when you breath down to your heart centre, you are taking that thought, question, feeling or person and placing it right in your heart.

You might think of your heart as a chalice, or beautiful vessel, or bowl. As you place your chosen thing in this special vessel, it welcomes it and holds it with compassion, kindness, strength and love. Let yourself become aware of the feeling of compassion surrounding and embracing whatever you place in your heart centre. Compassion is understanding, affirming, validating, respectful, gentle, but strong.

Your heart centre has an infinite capacity to hold and work with anything you take there. It can handle grief, doubt, fear, joy, sadness, disappointment....anything at all.

You can connect with your heart many, many times during the day. It is especially good to consciously connect with your heart if you wake during the night.

Sometimes the best thing to take into your heart is yourself. Take yourself as you are, with all your feelings, questions, memories, into your own heart. Use your breath; bring yourself into your awareness and breathe yourself into your heart centre.

Let your heart centre hold you with compassion, love, tenderness.

Try to feel the compassion and love gradually spreading out from your heart in all directions, like a warm glow.

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