



Today we are going to explore the nature of no birth and no death. When you practice listening with empathy, it means you listen without a listener. Normally to listen with your judgment about right and wrong, good and bad, and that is listening with a self. That is not listening with empathy. Listening with empathy means listening without a self. There is no listener. You and the one who is talking are one. In order to be able to do that, you need to practice letting go of yourself. Let go of the idea about yourself. Once you are free from your idea by yourself, you will be free from the idea about the other. You are one with the other, there is no more separation between you and the other. Listen in that way, listen with empathy. The art of letting go of yourself is the art of looking deeply into yourself to discover your true self. If I say, I am Cuong Lu, if I'm only Cuong Lu, it means I am a very small self full of judgments therefore I can not listen to you. I might compare myself, my experience, my past, my present, or my future with what you are saying, therefore I can not truly understand you. In order to truly understand you, I have to be able to let go of myself. That's not difficult. You can do that.

If I look deeply into Cuong Lu, where was Cuong Lu before his birth? Before the birth of Cuong Lu, there was no Cuong Lu. Where will Cuong Lu be after his death? There won't be Cuong Lu after his death. No Cuong Lu before his birth, no Cuong Lu after his death. They call that the no birth, no death nature of Cuong Lu. If I'm caught in the idea of the birth and the death of Cuong Lu, I'm only Cuong Lu after birth and before death, then I will be very small. If I'm able to look before my birth and after my death and I'm able to accept life before birth is also my life and life after death is also my life, I will get in touch with the no birth and no death nature of myself. That's very interesting. I'm not telling you something very difficult. I'm telling you something you can understand and we can apply to the art of listening with empathy.

Life before birth. I can see my father and mother, my grandma and grandpa who passed away before my birth. And I accept that they are also me. And if I look at life after death, I will see my children and my grandchildren, the future generations, and accept that life after death also is also my life. In that way, birth and death do not limit me anymore. I can be my grandpa. I can be my grandchildren. I am able to let go of Cuong Lu to be my grandpa, to be my grandchild, and to be you. To be you. I am you. I am you when I'm able to let go of myself. I am my grandpa when I'm able to let go of myself. I am my grandchild, and I can be you.

If I apply this insight in listening with empathy, I can feel you completely. You become me. It's very interesting to try to practice this. Now I would like to invite you to do a small exercise with me, the exercise of letting go. Breathing in, you're smiling. Breathing out, you let go of yourself. When you are able to let go of yourself you have space for the other. You can listen. So before listening to the other, you can do this exercise a few times to make space internal space, space you need to be the other. You are the other. So listen to the sound of the bell. [Sound of a bell



ringing.] Breathing in, you're smiling. Breathing out, you let go of yourself. In, smiling; out, letting go of yourself. Breathing in, smiling; out, letting go of yourself. Let go of all your ideas or judgments and now there's nothing left in you. You're so empty that you can feel "I am the other." You are no longer a listener. You are the one who is talking.

In fact the idea that you are only a very small self that is born and dies as a wave, you know a wave can be born you die. But you are not a wave, you are the ocean, you are the ocean of life. That is your true nature. In Buddhism, we call that the nature of no birth and no death. This is beautiful wisdom. You have this wisdom of no birth and death. You are the ocean. You are not a wave, you are the ocean. As you are the ocean you can be anybody, you don't judge. As the ocean, you have the heart of understanding and you have the heart of compassion. When you listen with this insight, when you listen with this compassion, the other person feels at ease. He is able to share something with you because he has a feeling you can understand him or her completely, completely. You're no longer the outsider.

Listen to him or her for 20 minutes in this way. He or she will experience a kind of transformation. If he is suffering, after you listen in this way for 20 minutes, he will be free from his suffering. You have to try. I'm not telling you something you cannot do. It's something you can practice, you can try. When you listen without a self you will see a wonderful transformation will take place. What is the foundation of suffering? Suffering is based on wrong perception of the self, you think you are a limited self. You are not, you are unlimited. You're not limited. Suffering is based on your wrong perception of time. You think you are the past, you think you are the future, you think you are the present. But the ideas you have about yourself—about your past, your future, your present—are wrong ideas. If you are free from all ideas in you you become unlimited. You become everyone; you become your grandma, grandpa, grandchildren. You become the person who is talking to you, and you can listen to her with empathy. In a way, you have discovered your true home. You know life is your true home.

My mother told me a story about the moment my grandma passed away, before my birth. My grandma said, "I'm going to die and go home at six o'clock." She knew the time she would die, she told my mother, "I will go home at six." At six o'clock she passed away peacefully. If you know your true nature, you know you are the ocean, you have the nature of no birth, no death. You realize you are the other. And you can listen to the other with empathy. You can live your life in a way that you're not caught in your small self.

Anytime you see you're caught by your small self, you can do the practice I shared with you: breathing in, I smile; breathing out, I let go of my small self. After practicing this a few times you will feel at ease again. Listening with empathy is also practicing letting go of yourself.

Cuong Lu
Listening with Empathy
Part 4: “Listen with Your Insight”
February 27, 2021



During the time that you're listening, you are the other and when you're aware that you are the other you don't judge the other. You only have a deep understanding and a deep compassion for them. That is a deep practice of letting go of the wrong ideas about yourself so you can get in touch with true life, true life, your life.

I know you can do this. In my experience, suffering only lasts for 20 minutes. If you are able to get in touch with suffering from your true insight, the insight of no birth and no death, the insight that you are life, the insight that you are the other, after 20 minutes he will be free of suffering. Suffering must get a transformation if you get in touch with that with your insight. The moment he is free, you are free too. It is very interesting. His freedom is your freedom because you are him. You can practice this wonderful practice of listening with empathy in your daily life. I wish you good luck in your practice. I know who you are. To me, you are the Buddha. You have insight and compassion. You can do this easily. Thank you very much for listening to my talks.