

John Makransky

Week 2, [The Healing Power of Innate Love and Wisdom: Meditations from Tibet for Westerners](#)

June 9th, 2014

“The Benefactor Moment”

Hi, welcome back. I’m John Makransky. Today we’re going to connect with moments of care from our lives, and learn how that can help draw us further into our full potential through meditation. This practice, like all that I’m sharing, is adapted from Tibetan Buddhism—some pattern, some practice in Tibetan Buddhism, and particularly from the Tibetan Nyingma tradition.

In our last meditation, last week, of the three deep letting-be’s, we were learning to let patterns of feeling—and thought and emotion—begin to relax and unwind within a basic openness of mind, that was led into through the deep letting be of body and breath. And within this basic openness of mind, there’s a compassionate space for deep accepting and allowing and letting be within all the patterns of our experience. And this is a space of natural kindness, warmth, that’s within the very ground of our experience—the background of our experience—always there, has always been there, but has not always come through in a way that we’re conscious of.

In the meditation of the three deep letting-be’s, we were learning how to access that basic background of essential kindness, warmth, loving care for every aspect of our experience. This underlying capacity of kindness and care, from the very ground of our experience, has actually been taking expression all along throughout our lives. And that’s what I want to point out today. It’s been taking expression, this power of care and kindness, through people and beings all around us, and also through us in many little moments of loving connection and joy in each other, moments that have mostly been forgotten, or never came to cognitive, conscious recognition, many moments of joy in each other, loving connection, even for just an instant, not only with people that we know, like family members, or people in our neighborhood or communities, or schools, or where we work, but even very frequently with perfect strangers to us.

Like the example of, again, the story last week of the Haitian cab driver and the man in the street, a moment of compassionate connection with a stranger. In any moment of loving connection, someone in that moment sees us, or we see someone in their essential dignity, worth, and potential. We’re seeing, in a moment of loving connection, more than our limiting label. Just a stranger, just a girl, just an old guy, we’re seeing and sensing into much more than that in a moment of loving connection, something we appreciate, that’s more than our own label of the other person or being.

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To recall such a moment of loving connection can help us sense more of the dignity and potential in ourselves and others, and help us release further into the basic openness of mind from which love comes—the openness of mind we began to experience in the letting be meditation. What I am calling, here, a benefactor moment is a moment that you can recall when someone was with you in a simple, loving way, taking joy in your being, wishing you well, any little moment of care, of joking together, play, laughter, a moment when someone was deeply listening to you, or you deeply listened to another, or someone was very present to you, as if you mattered a lot in that moment.

If it makes you happy to recall such a moment of simple care, loving connection, then it is very suitable to bring to mind for this practice that I’m about to lead. So try to recall such a moment now. Or maybe I’ll help a little bit. First, I’ll tell a little story. Just an example: my uncle Howie. So when we were little children, uncle Howie used to come for Army-Navy weekend in Philadelphia, where I grew up, and after the Army-Navy game was over, he would come to our house, us three little children together, and he would play Scrabble with us all weekend in his pajamas, sitting on the floor with us. That was moments of loving connection.

In those moments, uncle Howie was not saying, “I love you,” the word never came up. It was just play and laughter together. So that kind of gives an example of it. He also taught us how to crack, not only our fingers but also our toes, which got him in trouble with our mother. So it was just fun together. But that’s an example of a moment of loving connection. So try to recall your own kind of moment of loving connection. It could be many different kinds, just a moment when that makes you happy to think of being with someone. Could be with a mentor, a teacher, a camp counselor, a friend of your parents, someone who lit up when they saw you, might be with a mentor. It might be a moment with your pet, lying on the rug with your dog, or your cat purring on your chest.

Just try to recall a moment like that: loving connection, simple care, joy in each other, someone you like to be with or near, a moment when you felt happy to be with someone, and just felt well and safe, loved. Just delving now into your memory, any time from early childhood, all the way to today, a moment that makes you happy to remember. Can you think of one? See what pops into your mind, or who pops into your mind. Okay, does everybody have one? Just nod. Okay, I’m joking. Obviously, I can’t see you. Okay.

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So let's start the meditation. I'm going to do some cleansing breaths at the beginning, like we did last week. Again, repeat the pattern. We will inhale, imagine that the breath goes into the lower abdomen. Upon inhaling, the tummy expands—should expand, physically. You imagine your mind drops down into oneness with the breath and lower abdomen, and then you hold. And on the exhale, imagine that all your worries are being released. Ready? Okay, here we go. Inhale and hold, mind just dropped down, holding, and release. And inhale, tummy expands, mind drops down, hold, and release. Now, as we've done this a few times, try to relax and do it a little bit. Not uptight, try and relax it as you hold. Inhale, hold, and release. Inhale, and hold, and release. Inhale, and hold, and release.

And now, just gently bring to mind a benefactor moment, just a moment of simple, loving connection, or joy in each other, play or laughter together, any moment like that for you. And consider this moment, not just a distant memory recalled from the past, but imagine that that person, or being, is present here now in that way. Imagine that that moment is now, not just a memory. And imagine that that person is communing with you, connecting with you, in the goodness of your very being, sensing and responding to your deep worth and potential; beyond all limiting judgments, just taking joy in you, wishing you deeply well. And feel the happiness of holding that person in mind, of inhabiting that moment now with him or her, just opening, accepting, and letting them commune with you in the basic goodness of your being, just wishing you well.

And it's happening now. Just relaxing into it, accepting it, allowing it, being with that person or being, now, in that way. If your mind becomes distracted—as it often is—when you notice that, just gently bring it back to the instruction, recalling, again, that benefactor moment with someone, somewhere, that makes you happy to recall. Do not consider it just a memory from the past, but consider that it's happening now, and just inhabit it again, opening to that feeling of loving connection, of deep wishing you well, and just accepting it, just steeping in it, that feeling of loving connection, or joy, in each other, and just relaxing into it.

And now just let go of any visualization, or any envisioning, or recalling, of the benefactor moment, by just letting go into the feeling of loving connection, that feeling of loving energy or kindness or connection, just dropping all frameworks of mind, and now letting the mind just fall totally open, letting all patterns of thought and feeling just relax and unwind within this space of openness, of deep accepting and allowing. And experience all the thoughts and feelings and

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sensations that may occur within this compassionate space of deep allowing, the natural kindness of letting all be. Gong.

That’s the gong. So that’s the end of the meditation session, which means this is the moment of transition from meditation to what follows. The instruction, at this moment of transition, is to just let the atmosphere, or sense, of the meditation practice continue to resonate into whatever we do next. So, in that practice, we identified a benefactor moment. And by the way, everybody, I’m sure, can identify benefactor moments, but at first it can be a bit challenging. So we’re not used to that kind of instruction. We’re just thinking back into moments, we’re not looking for perfect saints, or people who are always good to us every moment, nothing like that. We’re only looking for a moment of connection, or joy, in each other.

And this is often also the happening with people who we think of as strangers, not just people officially close to us. Like a young woman at a checkout counter who returns your change, and says, “I hope you have a great day.” And in that moment, you can sense that she means it. And that’s a moment of connection, of genuinely wishing well. So my sense of it is that we’ve all experienced thousands of little moments like this. So if we don’t get sidetracked by thinking that the instruction to find a benefactor moment involves finding some kind of a perfect person, or a life, or someone who always feels perfectly loving to us, if we don’t do that, then we have a really good chance of beginning to recall benefactor moments.

A mindfulness practice that goes with it is just to begin to notice them in our days, starting now. And that would be an assignment for next week. Try to notice little moments of loving connection, or joy, in each other, wishing well, or empathy or care, or really listening. It happens, not only in our own personal lives with others, but also noticing when it happens around us. And that can help inform our practice, open it up, and show us, “Wow, there are lots of moments like that. I can certainly bring one to mind for this meditation.” What can unfold from this second meditation—this simple communing or connecting, proverbially, with a caring figure or benefactor—one, through this practice in this moment of loving connection that we’re inhabiting, we are introduced to our deep dignity, and unconditional worth and potential.

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And that’s actually true in the course of our whole development in our life. We’re introduced to our deep dignity—and worth and potential—by others who see it in us, who take joy in the basic goodness of our being, like, “It’s a good thing you’re alive. I’m glad you exist. That basic feeling; who wish us well, and in that way, help us to recognize and begin to accept our deep dignity and worth and potential. And it’s from there, from that place, that we can sense the same in others, their deep dignity and worth and potential, perhaps more than they may be thinking, at the moment. And by recognizing that in them, helping them also to recognize their dignity and potential.

For another way to phrase all this is what’s coming through this practice, is this simple truth: to experience ourselves, as seen and loved in our deep worth and potential, empowers us to see others in their deep worth and potential, with affection and care for them; to experience ourselves as the object of loving care, and connection and joy, helps empower us to be the subject of it, and vice versa. So in the patterns of practice that I’m going to be sharing from Tibetan Buddhism, both those aspects will be brought out. Here, we experience ourselves as the object of loving care. In a later meditation I’ll introduce here, we’ll experience ourselves as the subject of loving care, for others more.

Secondly, what flows out of this meditation of communing with a benefactor in such a moment, the loving energy in the last part of the meditation, the very last piece of the meditation, when the instruction came to just let go of any visualization, just let the mind fall open, let all the patterns of thought and feeling relax and unwind within a deep openness, and a deep letting be, that final instruction; it’s the loving energy from the communing with a benefactor in the moment of loving connection. It’s the loving energy from the benefactor connection, which, in that last part of the meditation, helps give the mind more power to relax its grip, to release more fully into the spacious ground of its experience, the unconditional openness in which patterns of feeling and thought can unwind and heal, the place of replenishment and safety from which we can become a more healing and safer presence for others.

It’s the loving energy that empowers the mind to let go more. And it does that, thirdly, by helping the mind to trust its basic ground. The loving energy of the practice, the feeling of being loved in the practice, and its loving energy, helps the mind to trust, as the mind trusts authentic love. And in that moment, there was some authentic love happening. Just in that moment, that’s enough. When the mind feels authentic love, it trusts it. And in doing so, it’s learning to trust the

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source of that love, which is the basic openness of our awareness from which it comes.

So love helps the mind to trust, and relax into its ground, which opens the space of wisdom to begin to sense the fuller personhood of one’s self and others, beyond our limiting labels, relaxing into more of what we are. And through that, sensing more of what others are—much, much more than the latest reaction, or limiting thought of each other.

So for each day in this coming week, I would suggest that you do this meditation of communing with benefactors, for a benefactor moment, for a little while each day. Could be for 10 minutes, or 15, or 20 minutes, and you can alternate it with the deep letting be meditation that we did last week. So each form of meditation, the simplicity of the letting-be meditation can help inform this communing-with-benefactor meditation. And the communing-with-benefactor meditation—with its loving energy—can help the mind relax more into the letting-be’s. Indeed, the last part of the benefactor communing meditation releases itself into the letting-be’s, as we just did.