



In this next talk, we're going to be focusing on compassion. The difference between loving-kindness and compassion is holding a slightly different aspiration. But in terms of one's mind and heart being open and full of love or *tsewa* [tenderness of heart], a genuine sense of care being there, that's the same in loving-kindness and compassion.

In the case of loving-kindness, we focus on *happiness* and the conditions of happiness. When we focus on happiness and the conditions of happiness, it's more upbeat. Compassion is more about focusing on how much beings are *suffering* and how much suffering there is in the world. How can we relieve others' suffering? If there is no way to relieve others' suffering, we can just be in touch with their suffering? In our aspirations, how can we avoid isolating ourselves and being oblivious to others' suffering? We should stay in touch with others' suffering, so that perhaps when the right conditions or situation arises, we can be helpful, we can make ourselves available and extend ourselves to help.

Although the emotion of compassion is motivated by being concerned or moved by the conditions of suffering, it encourages a similar kind of growth in us as loving-kindness does. It stretches our heart in a different way, working on a different muscle of our heart and mind. It allows us to discover different attitudes of our mind that we should drop and be free from. Usually we long to be free from suffering, when we're focused on suffering, we experience a lot of worries, anxieties, and a feeling of being isolated in one's own suffering. Then on top of your suffering or noticing the suffering of other beings, there's a feeling of self-pity, which makes it even harder. You can feel lost in the self-pity that you experience on top of your suffering, and it can prevent you from having the courage to rise above the suffering and the conditions of suffering.

When you focus on the others' suffering, you can begin to see how much suffering is relative and universal to all beings. But at the same time, no matter how much beings are suffering, there's the potential to overcome that suffering. It may be that one becomes free from suffering and the conditions of suffering from the outer conditions and restored back to a state of well-being. But it can also happen from the inside, since much of our suffering is felt by the mind. We can create a different feeling, attitude, and perspective in the mind, and even change the way our mind relates to suffering. If we change that, suffering could become a kind of positive and helpful growth in our lives.



That provides tremendous benefit. It makes you a little bit more fearless, more courageous, more able to drop the sense of “Why is this only happening to me? Why is this happening to me but not to others?” That is really not the case, truthfully. Suffering is universal.

Compassion arises from focusing on the suffering of living beings. This evokes the sense of care, or tsewa, the same as before. All living beings wish to be happy and long to be free from suffering, and we are no different. We are all equal in that as living beings. We can get in touch with that to feel tenderness towards ourselves and others. It's very important to feel tenderness towards ourselves. Then you can extend that tenderness from yourself to others.

To generate compassion, visualize a living being who is suffering. It could be yourself, if you are suffering. Just take a few deep breaths. [Pause.]

In the case where you are focusing on yourself first, perhaps you are suffering from old age, or sickness, or you have not been able to meet your life's goals so there's a feeling of failure. Or you have run into some troubles or worries so you are feeling anxious, lost, or overwhelmed by the intensity of the emotions inside of you. Or it could be that you have had some losses—you've lost a relative, or a loved one, or you've lost an important relationship that you cared about. Whatever suffering you're feeling, just feel the suffering itself first without rejecting it. Just feel the suffering. [Pause.]

A lot of the time the feeling of suffering is not physical, it's mental. It's sharp in the chest, but it's a sharpness in your emotional state that causes you to feel this pain. It's activated by one's own thought process. Along with all of this, there's also a rejection of your suffering and of your emotions, a kind of longing that makes it worse. “How could I escape from this? What can I do to not be in this state? What could I do to relieve myself from this state? How could I find relief for a moment, or even feel free for good? What can I do? Where do I go? Can I run away from these conditions?”

There's this really deep longing to be free from suffering. Be in touch with that, and see it as an expression of being unhappy with your own experience of suffering. It's not only the conditions but the experience itself. [Pause.]

Here is something really helpful. Consider that you need to be free from suffering. It's important that you are free from suffering. If there's something you can do in the present moment to be free from suffering, you should do it. That means you are working, you are actually trying to succeed.



As you strengthen that process, you could make a supplication or a prayer, “May I be free from suffering and the conditions of suffering.” Then make an aspiration on your own behalf, “May I truly be able to feel that relief.” [Pause.]

From here, you can extend your compassion outwards. There may be someone you are sharing the same kind of life with, a close relation, someone who is going through the same circumstances as you are. Your spouse or your children may be experiencing the same kind of loss or suffering that you are. Focus on their suffering and see how they're being affected by that suffering. See how they're also having the same internal experience, the same sharp burning, discomfort, and anxiety. Whatever anxiety is present in your mind, whatever worry is present, consider that they may also be going through that. They're also constantly trying to seek relief from that suffering, and perhaps they're feeling quite overwhelmed and lost about what to do and how they are feeling. There could also be a loss of sleep, health, or well-being due to the suffering that they are enduring.

When you contemplate this, you don't stay closed down in your own suffering. For example, if your family has lost a mother, the whole family is affected, not just you. You can focus on your siblings and your father who are also suffering. Really feel that and make an aspiration, because it's a necessity for all to feel relief from that suffering and loss. Everyone needs to eventually find a state of peace and normalcy for life to carry on with more meaning and joy. So make aspirations on behalf of your family members to be free from suffering. [Pause.]

From there, you can go further to consider different people in your community who may be ill, old, or even dying. Think of those who have faced big losses in their life, and obstacles to being peaceful and prosperous. They might be experiencing mental or physical discomfort. They might have a lot of worries, anxieties, or sharp experiences. Whether it's someone you know or someone you've heard about, try to really put yourself in that person's shoes and experience what they are going through. [Pause.]

Then make an aspiration: “May they all be free from suffering and whatever sharpness, discomfort, or pain that they endure internally and externally. May they all be relieved from those experiences and their conditions.”

Then go to the global level. On the global level, people are suffering in so many different ways. Of course, there's the general suffering of old age, sickness, and death. Then there's loss, and obstacles. So many human beings are suffering with worries and anxieties, feeling overwhelmed



both mentally and physically. On top of this, there are natural disasters that cause a lot of people suffering. There are conflict within countries, political conflict and civil wars, where people suffer and lose so much, especially children. Then there's drought, famine, and disease. Reflect on how much suffering there is all over the world. There's suffering in the news, in what we hear, and in what we see. Try to put yourself in any one of those situations. Feel yourself *in* that, not separate from it. Imagine the experience and the pain. [Pause.]

Then, make the aspiration, “May they all be free from suffering and the particular conditions of that suffering. May they be free from those conditions and may they all be restored to a state of peace, harmony, and joy.” Repeat this, “May all global citizens of the world be free from suffering and the conditions of suffering.”

Then go beyond that and think about all of the animals in this world who are suffering. Then consider the additional suffering that we human beings inflict upon them—for food, for clothing, and for different uses. They are suffering so much. Put yourself in their shoes and feel their experiences and wish, “May all of them be free from suffering. May all of the conditions of suffering be removed. May all they be in a state of peace and harmony with human beings. May they have greater peace in this life and a higher rebirth.”

From there, go to all the living beings across space who are suffering in various forms, known or unknown to us, and the need those beings to be free from suffering. Think “May all of them be free from suffering and the conditions of suffering.” Unless you are completely one with universal peace and absolute peace, suffering is going to occur. So we can wish, “May all of them be free from suffering and one with the universal absolute truth, which is the state of nirvana, the state of peace.” [Pause.]

That's the compassion practice. As we spend more time bearing hardship we become more fearless and more courageous. We become more able to take responsibilities, not to just wish to do so, but to take responsibilities on behalf of others.