

UA Faculty Learning Community Cognitively-Based Compassion Training (CBCT)

CBCT was developed by Geshe Lobsang Tenzin Negi, Ph.D. as a secular adaptation of a logical sequence of steps (*lamrim*) used in Tibetan Buddhism to cultivate the pre-conditions needed for compassion to arise spontaneously. In CBCT, 8 weekly classes introduce the role and function of each step, and guided meditation practices are used to deepen and cultivate each step. For use with Western audiences, certain elements of traditional Buddhist philosophy are omitted such as karma and reincarnation.

The primary meditation approach used in CBCT is that of lo-jong or “mind transformation” or “mind training.” Considered to be an analytically-oriented style, lo-jong specifically cultivates compassion by transforming the mind away from a purely self oriented focus toward a self AND other focus, one that is more inclusive and unifying. In the training and as relevant to the particular step, CBCT combines several discrete meditation practices (e.g., focused concentration, open awareness (mindfulness), 7-point cause and effect, equalizing and exchanging self and others, metta).

This guided meditation incorporates the pedagogy and practices from the entire CBCT program, and is therefore a summary of all 8 weeks of classes. However, because each weekly class covers each step in depth, this summary meditation is perhaps most effective when used as a daily meditation practice after attending a full CBCT course.

Each guided meditation in CBCT follows an outline and headings (in blue) reflect the class topics.

Posture

Each meditation begins by establishing a correct posture that promotes focus and alertness, yet holds the body with an attitude of gentleness. Spend a few moments reviewing usual instructions for sitting in a chair or sitting cross-legged on the floor.

Body Scan for Relaxation

Instruction to close the eyes (or leave them slightly open if preferred), and to breathe normally. Instructions continue as follows:

- **Back** held upright and long, yet relaxed.
- **Hands** flat on thighs or cup them one inside the other on the lap.
- **Shoulders** softened, but kept level.
- **Head** balanced with chin tucked in. Head pulled slightly upward as if suspended from a balloon by a string.
- **Face** relaxed, receptive, gentle.
- **Brow** smoothed, back to the ears and down into the neck.
- Muscles around the **eyes**, softened and relaxed.
- Maintain **stillness** as much as possible.

(0:10 pause)

3 Rounds of Relaxation Breathing

Instruction to take 3 rounds of slow, gentle breaths (inhalation followed by exhalation) through the nostrils for relaxation. On exhalations, prompt to “let go” or “relax.” After the 3 rounds of breaths, instruct to just allow the breath to rise and fall its natural rhythm.

(0:15 pause)

Aspiration to Cultivate Compassion

To develop the heart and mind to embrace compassion for ourselves and for a greater and greater number of people around us, we cultivate an aspiration by recalling an experience of compassion. Connect with a time when you've experienced great feelings of compassion or nurturance in your life. Perhaps in childhood, when receiving caring from parents or caregivers. Or, if its difficult to recall a parent or caregiver in this way, remember time in your life when someone else was there for you, if even briefly. Who the person was is not important; what is important is the feeling of caring. An experience of being attended to without any judgment, without any expectation. Evoke evoke the compassionate qualities this experience embodies such as caring, kindness, acceptance. Let this warmth and security just fill your whole body and mind.

PAUSE

Reflect on how valuable such qualities and attitudes are. Allow deep appreciation of these qualities inspire you to find these same qualities in yourself. And to cultivate and enhance them so you become the source of happiness and well-being for others, while also experiencing these feelings at the *same* time.

(0:10 pause)

Stabilizing the Mind

Compassion can be fleeting, and often obscured by the activities of our mind. Let us enhance the mind to have greater *stability*, leading to greater *clarity* of our own thoughts and feelings. Bring your attention into the present by focusing on the breath. Gently, place your attention just below the nostrils. With that as a reference point, for a few moments, simply maintain balanced attention to each incoming and outgoing breath.

(0:10 pause)

You may notice how quickly the mind moves away from the present moment into memories of the past or anticipations of the future. We are often distracted from the breath by a stream of thoughts, images, feelings, and emotions. As soon as you notice these distractions, simply acknowledge them. And, without judging the distractions as good or bad, without trying to follow them or suppress them, just gently return your attention to your breath.

(0:10 pause)

When you notice you've become distracted, just return your attention to your breathing.

(0:15 pause)

Over and over, as many times as needed, when distractions arise, just gently bring your attention back to the sensations of your breathing.

(0:15 pause)

Mind's Natural State

Now, from this stabilizing concentration on the breath, we open to a fuller awareness of our unfolding inner experiences. Awareness is like the widened beam of a floodlight, and is the mind's natural state. Just let your mind relax into open awareness. Quietly witness whatever arises in the mind--that on-going stream of thoughts, feelings, and sensations. Simply note their arising, without following them or becoming carried away by them.

(0:10 pause)

Resting in natural awareness, maintain your relaxation and observation. Try and be present in *each* moment, without re-hashing the past or anticipating the future.

(0:10 pause)

Relax into the expanse of this spaciousness and awareness.

(0:10 pause)

Like the vast, blue sky, your mind is an open space that does not block anything from appearing in it or hold onto anything that arises in it. Just observe the thoughts, feelings, and emotions that arise as though they were passing clouds, coming and going in the space of your mind.

(0:10 pause)

Like **waves on the surface of an ocean**, thoughts and emotions come and go. Yet its depths, the ocean remains calm, untouched by the turbulent waves. Your mind is a calm presence deep in the ocean with waves only at the surface. Just rest in the deep stillness of your mind.

(0:10 pause)

Self-Compassion

Now in self-compassion, reflect briefly on your inner world. Underlying all of our mental experiences, all of our hopes, and expectations, our worries, is a simple yearning to be happy and have well-being and to be free from distress and suffering and their causes.

(0:10 pause)

As we connect with this natural desire, we also reflect on the many ways we contribute to our unhappiness, our suffering.

- At times, we all mistakenly chase after or hold onto external things we believe will bring happiness. A new car, praise and recognition, an accomplishment, tasty food or drink. However, these external things are impermanent and don't last. Like the passing clouds of our thoughts.
- Sometimes, our unhappiness comes from disappointments whenever we have faulty perceptions and misplaced expectations about what may happen.
- At still other times, we see how our emotions and behaviors are reactions to these faulty perceptions and expectations. This reactivity is often far more difficult than the circumstances that caused it in the first place.
- And, we have **habits of mind** that contribute to our unhappiness. We grasp—we ruminate and obsess. We create stories and fantasies.

(pause)

Now, aspire to transform any internal causes of suffering and dissatisfaction so that you may have happiness and well-being. Imagine a **pearl of radiant white light at your heart**. That light is the essence of all the strength and goodness within you. Visualize this light expanding to every part of your body and mind. Now inwardly, say to yourself:

May I feel happy and whole.

May I feel free from internal and external harm.

May I feel safe and protected.

May my life unfold smoothly and with ease.

(pause)

Now, return your attention to the breath. Remain relaxed.

(0:15 pause)

Equanimity and Impartiality

Now, reflect on how our basic wish for happiness and freedom from suffering is something we share it with all other people. Whether they are our loved ones, or are strangers to us, even people we don't like or who are adversaries in some way. Although these groups are different and often evoke different reactions in us, at their core, everyone also shares the same basic yearning to be happy and to be free from discomfort and suffering, just like you. And, like you, all of these people cling to external things for happiness, have misplaced expectations and perceptions, often worsen their suffering with over-activity, and have mental habits that are uncomfortable or distressing. In these ways also there are no differences among us.

(pause)

Expand this insight gradually to include the people in this room, this university, your family and friends...and then further, to eventually encompass all humanity. Fundamentally, in our aspiration to be free of problems and suffering, in wanting well-being and happiness, there are no differences among any of us. Everyone, equally, wants to be happy and to be free from suffering and its causes, just like you. If we are all fundamentally alike in this way, we must relate impartially to all people, and really experience them as having no differences. Allow this awareness to sink into your heart.

(0:15 pause)

Appreciation and Gratitude

Now, recognize that ultimately we are all deeply interconnected and depend on each other; we *need* each other. When we cooperate and support one another, we thrive and succeed.

(0:15 pause)

Reflect: None of our accomplishments could have been made had it not been for the help and kindness of someone you know. A teacher perhaps, a parent, a friend. Allow appreciation and gratitude arise in your heart for this person.

(pause)

Now, expand this gratitude beyond someone whose kindness you know of and reflect on the many countless others who benefit you every day in ways you aren't aware of. Think of the long interconnection and interdependence that surround you...perhaps the farmers who plant vegetables, the truckers who transport the vegetables to market, the grocers who display them for your selection. Or those who grow cotton, weave cloth, and sewed the shirt you're wearing. Let appreciation of this fill your heart. And think of how it would feel to honor the kindnesses of all these people if only you could.

(0:10 pause)

Affection and Empathy.

Reflecting on the kindness and benefits you've received from countless others, allow great affection and tenderness to arise. Generate this affection so that it sinks into your heart.

(0:10 pause)

As you hold all the many beings who benefit you with tenderness and affection, reflect on their situations: Although they wish for happiness, how often they are deprived of genuine and lasting wellbeing. Despite their desires to be free from suffering and its causes, their lives hold much dissatisfaction. Just like us.

(0:10 pause)

Wishing Love and Compassion.

Now let us wish for love and compassion. Think again of the many difficulties and sufferings these people experience, both those close to you and those far from you – their fears, anxieties, disappointments –their lack of genuine happiness. Holding them all in tenderness and affection, Again, visualize the essence of your love and compassion as a **pearl of white light** filling your body and mind and then emanating out from you to loved ones, strangers, difficult people... eventually to everyone in the world. Let a **wish** arise in your heart for them all to be free of suffering and to have happiness. Inwardly, speak the wish with a tone of intensity:

*"May all of us, all people, all beings,
Be happy and be free from suffering.
It would be so wonderful."*

Focus whole-heartedly on this aspiration. Let it fill your heart and mind, encompassing you, stretching out from you, really soaking you and all others, easing suffering and distress, and bestowing all with happiness and well-being.

(0:15 pause)

Conclusion, Dedication, and Intention

In a moment, the bells will signal the end of this practice. We conclude by dedicating the positive efforts of our practice to peace and wellbeing throughout the world. Then silently, speak an intention to retain these qualities of compassion throughout all your daily activities,.

(0:15 pause)

(End of meditation)