

Compassion Meditation for Time of War

Preliminaries

So first of all set up a comfortable, upright posture.

Take your awareness through your body and relax each muscle. Start with your feet, and work your way up to your head and face.

Take your awareness into your heart, sensing whatever emotions are present.

Accept that whatever is there is where you are starting from.

First Stage: cultivating metta

Start by cultivating metta – love and appreciation – for yourself. Imagine or feel that the emotions in your heart are a pool of water. Drop thoughts into your heart like flower petals into a pool. Maintain an awareness and sensitivity towards the ripples coming from the flower petals as the thoughts sink into the depth of your being. So we repeat, “May I be well, may I be happy, may I be free from suffering.” Letting each phrase fall into the pool of our heart, being aware of and sensitive to the ripples coming from these flower petals. And keep bringing your awareness back to your heart with patience and kindness.

Second Stage: a suffering person

Call to mind someone you know personally and who is suffering in some way; either physically or psychologically. It’s probably best at this stage not to pick someone who is overwhelmed by suffering. That might be too much for us. Call that person to mind, and wish them well. May they be well, may they be happy, may they be free from suffering. You don’t actually have to cultivate compassion. Simply wish this person well as you call them to mind as a suffering person and notice what ripples travel through the still pool of your heart as your love meets their suffering.

Third Stage: good friend

Think of a good friend – someone you have a close and warm relationship with -- and who is experiencing some degree of suffering because of the current conflict. They may be anxious for themselves, or for loved ones, or for the possible long-term global effects of this war. While bearing in mind this person’s suffering, wish him or her well. May they be well, may they be happy, may they be free from suffering.

Fourth Stage: neutral person

Call to mind someone you don’t know, perhaps an ordinary Afghani who is experiencing fear and deprivation as a result of the conflicts in their country. Bear that person’s

suffering in mind, knowing that their suffering is as real to them as your suffering is to you. And wish them well. May they be well, may they be happy, may they be free from suffering.

Fifth stage: an enemy

Call to mind someone on the other end of this conflict; a terrorist or a member of the Taliban; perhaps a soldier. We may even despise the values that person holds, and the actions that they have committed or that they intend to do. Yet we can still recognize that this person suffers. Their frustration and anger and their fear are painful to them, and are the cause of pain for others. We can wish this person well, wishing that the hatred in his or her heart be healed by love. May they be well, may they be happy, may they be free from suffering.

Sixth Stage: all sentient beings

We can now wish that all beings be well, be happy, and be free from suffering, bearing in mind that all beings do indeed suffer, and that they wish to escape suffering. Every action that anyone commits – even the most misguided and evil action – is an attempt to escape suffering. So we can wish that all beings, including ourselves, find the wisdom to see that true happiness is supported by love and awareness, and not by hatred and violence. May all beings be well, may all beings be happy, may all beings be free from suffering. You can imagine your love radiating from your heart, touching all beings, and healing their suffering. May all beings be free from suffering and from the causes of suffering.

Ending the meditation

Let go of the act of wishing others well.

Relax back into an awareness of yourself.

Spend a minute or two absorbing the effects of the practice until you feel ready to open your eyes, ending the meditation practice and bringing your love and compassion into the world.