Compassion in a Time of War Meditation | Monday Night

Jack Kornfield · Notable Dhamma Teachers — Jack Kornfield · 25:27

You can relax and let go and feel fully supported just where you are. Steady. Strong. Let the belly be soft and the breath natural. And let the heart be soft as well, to receive whatever arises with a spirit of kindness and compassion.

With this embodied presence, let's begin with a practice of compassion.

Let yourself think of someone you care about where it's relatively easy, not terribly conflicted—someone where there's a natural sense of love and care. Tenderness. Picture them, remember them, sense them, feel them in any way you can. Let their spirit, the sense of this one that you care about, be seen and felt. Just now, feel your connection and how much you do care for their wellbeing.

While you can wish them well and send them loving kindness, let yourself also be aware of the struggles in their life, as in all human lives. Let yourself sense the sufferings or the struggles, the fears or pain, the difficulties of their life. And because you care about them, notice how immediately there arises a sense of compassion—the heart being touched, moved by their struggles and your care.

Then extend this compassion to them with simple phrases of well-wishing: May you be held in compassion. May your struggles or sorrows be eased. May you be safe and protected. And may your heart be at peace. May your struggles and sorrows be eased. May you be held in great compassion. May you be safe and protected. May your heart be at peace. May your life be at peace.

With these practices of compassion and loving kindness, you can alter the words so that they express your care in any way that works.

Now imagine this dear one, this person who you care about, could gaze back at you. They gaze with the same loving care, and you feel the connection. And they say, just as you have offered compassion and well-wishing, "I want to offer it back to you." They gaze at you and say, "I see your struggles and sorrows. May your struggles and sorrows be eased. May you hold yourself in great compassion. May you be safe and protected. And may your heart be at peace and your life be at peace. May your struggles be eased." They say, "May you be held in compassion."

You take in their care for you and maybe even put your hand on your own heart. Because they so want this for you, they care about you. You receive this and say yes. May I hold myself in compassion. May my struggles be eased. May I be safe and protected. May my heart be at peace. May my life be at peace. May I

hold myself in compassion for all the struggles of life.

Feel this. The heart opens with tenderness and care and courage. Strength and compassion.

Now think of another person who you care about. Picture them, this other loved one or person that you care about. Feel the care, the love that's there. Again, let yourself be aware of the measure of struggle or sorrows in their life—what they struggle with as a human being. Feel the tender compassion that arises. And again, extend the compassion in whispered words from the heart: May you be held in compassion. May your struggles be eased.

May you be safe and protected. May your heart be at peace. May your life be at peace.

And sense how you can open your heart, one after another, to extend the field of compassion. You can be like a lamp that shines this compassion now, out from your own consciousness and heart, across time and space. Feel the struggle of others.

And for this evening, let's extend our compassion and spread it to all those who are caught up in the wars of the world—frightened, lost, suffering. To mothers holding their children, clutching them in fear. To those who are old and aged or sick. To the youth. To those in the wars of Myanmar and Eritrea, of Sudan and Ukraine and Libya. To the young men and women being conscripted and drawn in. To the farmers and healers, to the teachers, merchants, and poets all caught up in war.

And this poem from John O'Donohue, extended with your compassion:

As the fever of day calms toward twilight, may all that is strained in us come to ease. We pray for all who suffered violence today—may an unexpected serenity surprise them. And for those who risk their lives each day for peace, may their hearts glimpse providence at the heart of history. That those who make riches from violence and war might hear in their dreams the cries of the lost. That we might see through our fear of each other a new vision to heal our fatal attraction to aggression. That those who enjoy the privilege of peace might not forget their tormented brothers and sisters. We pray that the wolf might lie down with the lamb, that our swords be beaten into plowshares, and no hurt or harm be done anywhere along this great holy mountain.

And let yourself envision those who are struggling in all those places named and beyond, young and old. And from your heart, extend the wishes and prayers of compassion in every direction to them. Held in compassion—all, all, all.

May your sorrows be eased. May you be safe and protected. May your heart find peace. And may your life find peace.

And staying present as a beacon of compassion, breathe gently, and with each breath extend the care, the courage, the tender compassion and strength. For some, it will be like radiating from your heart a sweet and luminous energy of compassion to surround beings everywhere. For some, it will ask and invite you

to picture the farmer, the mother with her child, the old ones, the teachers and poets and healers, the youth caught up in war. Sense that they might feel this and know this from you, as if we were connected across time and space. For we are. And even a pebble tossed in the ocean changes the whole ocean.

So let your prayers and compassion touch the heart of all. And feel how it's as if we're all holding hands together tonight—holding hands and extending compassion, opening our hearts as a prayer and a blessing, and a deep connection.

Thank you, dear ones, for practicing together with me and everyone else. I needed that. Maybe we all need that in some way. It feels so important and simple—to stop, to quiet the mind, tend and open the heart, and offer the connection and compassion and love that is so natural to us.

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