

ON COMPASSION

By Pierre Zimmerman

The Buddhist path of liberation entails developing compassion, which calls for deeper and deeper empathy with the suffering of more and more sentient beings, particularly in present times. Compassion can be unbearable without wisdom. Without wisdom, it won't allow us to embrace suffering, but pity those who are in discomfort and we will feel overwhelmed by suffering. Realizing wisdom, we recognize that all phenomena exist as dependently related events. Either one, compassion or wisdom, without the other, becomes bondage.

Cultivating compassion primes the pump for the realization of the profound interdependence of all phenomena. We are aware of the dependent things and people that somehow become related. We are relation. All beings, with their joys and sorrows are equal, like ourselves, in yearning for happiness. Cruelty is the diametric opposite of compassion. Immeasurable compassion is the great remedy to cruelty and is the foundation of spiritual maturation.

We practice self-compassion, which requires the need to be mindful, accept and make space internally, so that we can relate to what happens without resistance. Self-compassion requires that we remember our common humanity and that we are not alone. We provide kindness, warmth and love as a motivation to relieve suffering. There is, on one hand, the tender side which allows one to be. On the other hand, there is the fierce side of tough love for protection and healthy boundaries. We cannot have empathic resonance with oneself or others when we favor self-criticism and judgment.

Not being able to have equanimity or realizing that we have limited control about other's suffering might get in the way. A loving connected presence makes our mind calm and peaceful. Immeasurable compassion is limitless in the sense of having no barriers, it flows evenly in all directions, towards any being, those with different skin pigmentation and cultures, those less fortunate than ourselves, and those with Buddha-mind. Our enlightened awareness has inexhaustible capacity for serving each other's needs.

There is no more powerful way to accumulate merit and spiritual transformation than through the cultivation of compassion.

“May you all be free of suffering and it's sources.”

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