



RECOVERY DHARMA Meditation for Sitting with Difficult Emotions

Find a comfortable seated position and gently close your eyes or, if you like, keep them open with a soft gaze. Make sure your back is upright and relaxed. Take three deep breaths to let out any tension you might be experiencing right now.

(Pause)

Allow your breathing to return to normal and begin noticing how your breath feels as you inhale and as you exhale. Notice where in your body you feel your breath the strongest. Your nose, your chest, your belly?

(Pause)

Now, bring to mind a situation for you that's causing you a lot of distress or suffering right now. Perhaps you are experiencing a lot of craving, blaming yourself for something, having difficulties in a relationship, or there is something in your life that is hard to deal with. If new to this type of meditation, try picking something that's not too difficult or painful. Choose something that causes you to feel a little stress in your body when you think about it.

(Pause)

Imagine the situation in as much detail as you can. Visualize the situation without getting lost in the story. Get in touch with your feelings about the situation.

(Pause)

Notice any emotions you feel when you think about this situation. There may be more than one emotion you feel when you bring this situation to mind. Label each emotion as you begin to notice it—anger, fear, disappointment, grief. What emotions are coming up for you right now?

(Pause)

Now, choose the emotion that feels the strongest for you. Where do you feel this emotion in your body? There may be several areas where you feel this emotion.

Is it a foggy feeling in the head, lump in the throat, heaviness in the heart, tightening in the stomach? Where do you feel this emotion the strongest? Focus on that area and describe for yourself how it feels. Is it tight, cold, hot, tingly, heavy, numb?

(Pause)

Bring all of your attention to this emotion and how it feels in the body. See if you can soften the feelings and sensations, relaxing any tension or stress. If the emotion feels too intense, focus your attention on the edges of the emotion. Rather than softening the whole feeling, you can try softening the edges or borders of the emotion in the body.

(Pause)

Notice if your mind drifts off into thought or tries to distract you from the feelings. It's normal to want to distract from painful feelings. If your mind wanders off, gently bring yourself back by reminding yourself of the situation and getting back in touch with your feelings about it. The goal is not to try and make the sensation disappear. This meditation is intended to allow you to be with the painful feelings with love and compassion.

(Pause)

Acknowledge for yourself how difficult this is. Part of being human is experiencing painful and difficult emotions. The good news is we can learn how to comfort ourselves for the suffering we experience in this life.

(Pause)

If you like, place one or both hands gently over your heart. Feel your heart and your breath. Feel the warmth of your hands against your chest offering yourself love, gentleness, and compassion.

(Pause)

Offer soothing and comfort to this difficult emotion, telling yourself you know how hard it is to feel this way. Try out some kind, compassionate, loving phrases such as:

"This is really hard right now" or "This is a moment of suffering" or something similar.

(Pause)

"It's human to experience suffering"

(Pause)

“May I be kind and gentle with myself.”

Use these phrases or pick some of your own and repeat the phrases silently to yourself.

(Pause)

This is a moment of suffering.

It’s human to experience suffering.

May I be kind and gentle with myself.

If your mind wanders, gently bring yourself back to your breath. These feelings are a natural reaction. You are allowed to feel this way. Try not to resist or blame yourself for these feelings. This is simply what’s happening right now. Offer yourself comfort and compassion for how hard this is. Continue repeating the phrases silently to yourself:

This is a moment of suffering.

It’s human to experience suffering.

May I be kind and gentle with myself.

(Pause)

You can use these three phrases like a mantra, reminding yourself to be gentle and kind toward your suffering.

This is a moment of suffering.

It’s human to experience suffering.

May I be kind and gentle with myself.

(Pause)

Letting the phrases go, allow yourself to just feel what is happening right now without trying to change anything. Allow the emotion to be there. Remind yourself that you’re safe in this moment. Your body is experiencing an emotion. Give yourself permission to allow this emotion to be there. If the discomfort becomes too intense, simply focus on your breathing and return to the feelings when you’re ready.

(Pause)

Notice any discomfort and allow yourself to feel it. Allow it to be there without trying to fix it or change it. Notice if any feelings or sensations change. Allow any discomfort to come and go, like waves in the ocean.

(Pause)

As we bring this meditation to a close, bring your attention back to your breath. Bring yourself back into this time and place. Feel your feet against the floor. You can wiggle your fingers and toes if you like and slowly open your eyes when you're ready.