## From Roshi Joan Halifax: Meditation Two

## Meditation:

Welcome back to our program exploring the cultivation of compassion.

Please sit comfortably in a chair.

Take a few moments to get settled in your chair and gently close your eyes.

(pause)

Allow yourself to get grounded, as you notice the sensation of your back where it meets the back of the chair.

(pause)

Sense the support of the chair and let yourself relax into it.

(slightly longer pause)

Relax your legs, keeping both feet flat on the floor.

Notice the sensation of the soles of your feet on the floor.

Notice if there is a sense of stability and confidence in the body, as you get more grounded by bringing attention gently to your feet on the floor.

(longer pause)

Now gently shift your attention to your spine.

(pause)

Recall that the spine is a metaphor for the mental quality of equanimity, the ability to stay balanced even in the face of challenge.

Sense into your back……

(Pause)

Strong back…….. equanimity……….

Know that equanimity supports you in being open to how others feel; so remind yourself of the value of equanimity, of being balanced, by silently saying, “Strong back….”

(longer pause)

Now let your attention go to your belly.

Breathe into your belly.

Be with the natural course of your breath, as your belly rises and falls, noticing the sensation of the breath as you breathe in and breathe out.

The breath will find its own natural rhythm.

You don’t need to force it in any way.

Just allow yourself to breathe in gently, and breathe out gently.

(Longish pause)

On your next outbreath, let go of any hesitation, any tension, any concerns that might be present.

(longish pause)

Feel any sense of softening or opening that may be present as you breathe into your belly.

(longer pause)

Now, please, gently and firmly, shift your attention to your chest.

Sense the tender, open space of your heart.

Rest in this openness, beginning to connect to a willingness to be with the suffering of others and yourself, and the wish to relieve it. This is compassion.

(long pause)

Strong back, soft front…….. Equanimity and compassion……….

(longer pause)

Quietly adjust your posture as the need arises.

Continue to bring your awareness to your breath as you continue to settle into your posture.

(Longish pause)

Consider that the true measure of our value as human beings is how we are with others.

(Pause)

Recall someone who has been especially kind to you.

(pause)

Connect with a sense of appreciation and love for this person.

You now wish to return this kindness out of love for him or her.

Remember that this person too, like all of us, has known suffering.

Wish with all of your heart that this person can realize wellbeing in every part of his or her life.

(Longish pause)

Be with this sense of kindness and care for this person.

(Pause)

As you are considering this person, let yourself soften and open to whatever thoughts, feelings and sensations arise.

Breathing in and out, allow yourself to let go of any thoughts, feelings, and sensations that arise.

Keep it very simple, just being with the breath, in and out, and being with the sense of this person.

(Pause)

Let yourself continue to soften.

Let your body soften.

Keep the feeling very easy as you breathe.

If you feel tight, you can breathe out this tightness with each exhale.

(Longish pause)

As you breathe in and out, you may feel that everything is becoming more spacious, easier and kinder, gentler and clearer. Relaxing in a deep way.

(Longish pause)

Now, begin to imagine yourself as a young child.

Imagine yourself happy and free.

If it is difficult to remember such a moment, perhaps you can recall a photo of yourself when you were bright eyed and happy.

If this is not possible, then bring to mind the face of a child who is joyful.

Feel what it must be like to be this child. Whatever the conditions of your childhood were like, give yourself now this gift of imagining the innocence and joy that a child can experience.

(Longish pause)

Look out through the eyes of the child, eyes that are clear, bright, and fresh.

Touch into this feeling of openness.

See through these innocent eyes.

These eyes are always here in you.

You are these innocent eyes, these deep eyes, these eyes of no judgment and no prejudice.

(Pause)

Let yourself feel at peace with this simplicity and openness, as you continue to breathe deeply.

(Long pause)

**Compassion for target (charity recipient):**

Each day will have a randomly selected charity recipient from a set of 12 possible recipients, and so each target will appear 2 or 3 times over the course of four weeks

Please open your eyes and look at the person on the iPod in front of you.

*For thirty seconds, this person’s biography plays over audio*

Keep it very simple.

Simply be present.

See out through non-judgmental eyes and gaze into the eyes of this person whose photograph is on the iPod.

Be aware of your breath and just gaze out through gentle eyes.

Keep it really simple, deeper than your personality.

If you find yourself pulling away or getting stuck, just come back to gently looking and breathing.

Simply gaze openly and quietly at the face of the person in the iPod.

Maybe a little more of who this person is is being revealed to you.

Keep the feeling clear and open.

(Pause)

Be with your breath.

Breathe deep into your belly.

Keep your vision soft and accepting as you gaze into the eyes of this person.

Notice how you feel.

If you begin to tighten or analyze, gently shut your eyes and go inside and remember the child whose eyes you were looking through earlier in the practice.

(Pause)

When you feel stable and clearer, let your eyes gently open and continue to gaze into the eyes and face of this person, with the same natural love and care and innocence of that child.

Gaze from this place of care and openness.

(Pause)

As you are with this one, maybe you can see the wear and care on her or his face.

Be aware of this one’s suffering, of this one’ difficulties, as you recall their story.

(Long pause)

Now, allow yourself to see the person on the screen as a young child, young like three or four years old, full of anticipation, full of good heart.

Look from the place inside of you that is fresh and calm.

Look without judgment.

See his or her eyes innocent, and free of fear and sorrow.

Look from the place inside yourself that is grounded in care and openness.

Keep it very simple.

See his or her good heart.

See through innocent eyes.

(Longish pause)

Now see this one as he or she is now, and see that her or his good heart is still

present.

Look through open eyes to the truth of this one’s life, as you can feel it.

(Long pause)

Please relax and close your eyes as you return your awareness to your breath, breathing deep in the belly.

(Pause)

Now, internally repeat these simple phrases of compassion toward this person:

With your breath, silently say to him or her:

“May you be free from suffering…

May you be free from the causes of suffering….

May you be safe…

May you find peace.”

(longer pause)

Continue to recall this person and their suffering, and silently, as best you can, with your full heart and attention, say to him or her:

“May you be free from this suffering…

May you be free of the causes of suffering….

May you be safe…

May you find peace.”

(short pause)

And for a final time, imagining this person you are close to, silently and with all your heart say to him or her:

“May you be free from this suffering…

May you be free from the causes of suffering…

May you be safe…

May you find peace.”

(short pause)

Imagine this potential as actual.

(long pause)

Let your wholehearted wish for this one’s well-being help strengthen your resolve to help others.

(long pause)

Without judgment, notice whatever you are experiencing?

Put your attention into the space around your heart.

What do you notice?

(pause)

Notice how your belly feels?

(pause)

Notice what the heart feels.

(Pause)

Are there other sensations that you can track right now in relation to your sensing of this person’s difficulties and his or her good heart and desire to get their life together?

(Longish pause)

Completing your practice, please offer to this person whatever good that has arisen for you in the twenty minutes of this session.

Wish for him or her the best, saying to yourself: May you find peace and well-being….. (pause)

Let that sense of tenderness, kindness and goodness flow from you to him or her.

(pause)

Throughout the day, remind yourself to bring the spirit of this practice into your everyday life in order to benefit others and yourself.

(pause)

Thank you for engaging in this process with us; may your day go well.