**From Roshi Joan Halifax: Meditation Three (this practice is called “exchanging self with other”)**

## Meditation:

Welcome back to our program on cultivating compassion.

Please sit comfortably in a chair.

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

(longish pause)

Notice the sensation of your back where it meets the back of the chair and sense the support of the chair, letting yourself relax into it.

(Long pause)

Now gently shift your attention to your spine.

(pause)

Sense into your back……

(Pause)

Remember how we use the back to key us into the mental quality of equanimity, of balance, of ease and acceptance.

(pause)

Strong back…….. equanimity……….

(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.

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

(Longish pause)

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

(longish pause)

Feel your natural courage and openness 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 for a few moments, this space of compassion, the willingness, strength, and concern to be with the suffering of others and yourself, and the wish to reduce that suffering. This is compassion.

(long pause)

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

(longer pause)

Adjust your posture as the need arises, and continue to bring your attention to your breath as you settle into your posture.

(Longish pause)

Recall that we are exploring how we can cultivate compassion.

To begin, please bring to your mind and heart to the presence of someone who is having a difficult time.

Maybe a friend or relative, someone you feel close to.

Open your heart and mind to this person.

Really let yourself sense into his or her situation.

Feel your way into this person’s heart.

(pause)

What are they going through? What is their experience?

(pause)

Now let yourself imagine looking out through his or her eyes.

(longish pause)

Imagine that you are this person, living his or her life, feeling her or his suffering, knowing his or her heart.

(longish pause).

Feel into how this friend, this relative experiences the world, experiences life.

Exchange yourself for this one, as you look out through her or his eyes.

(long pause)

Now gently shift your attention back to your breath.

Stay with the breath for the next moments.

(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.

Look with gentle and non-judgmental eyes at this person whose photograph is on the iPod and please listen to their story…….

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

Be aware of your breath and gaze out at this person through quiet eyes.

Keep it really simple, just taking in their presence.

Do not grasp or retreat with your gaze.

Simply gaze openly and quietly at the face of the person on the iPod, keeping the feeling clear and open.

(Pause)

While gazing at this person, shift your attention to your breath.

Breathe deep into your belly.

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

(longish pause)

Now please allow yourself to sense into this person, shifting your perspective from gazing at this person, to sensing from within this person.

Imagine looking out through his or her eyes.

(long pause)

What is your experience as you look out at the world through his or her eyes?

If you begin to analyze or tighten up, gently shut your eyes and go inside yourself.

When you feel stable, fresher, and clearer, let your eyes gently open and let yourself see out through her or his eyes again, sensing this one’s difficulties, as you recall his or her story.

(Long pause)

Now, gently close your eyes as you return your awareness to your breath, breathing deep in the belly.

(long 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, 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 these wishes of peace being true for this person.

(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 their 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.