

Finally, some meditation practices are specifically targeted toward the development of nonegocentric love and positive regard for others. For example, the Theravadin practice of *metta bhavana*, or loving-kindness (Germer, 2009; Salzberg, 1997) and the Tibetan practice of *tonglen* (“sending and taking”; Chödrön, 2000; Chapter 7) are centered around the meditational cultivation of compassion. In *metta* meditations, the practitioner locates and intensifies loving feelings toward him- or herself (although Westerners seemingly have more difficulty accessing self-love than individuals in some other cultures) and then applies these feelings, sequentially, toward a valued other, then more neutrally valued people (e.g., acquaintances or coworkers), then difficult people or enemies, and, finally, all sentient beings (see Chapter 3). In *tonglen* and its Western variations, the meditator “breathes in” pain and suffering from the world and specific people and “breathes out” love, compassion, and happiness back to them (see Chapter 7). From an experiential perspective, such exercises allow the practitioner to locate, identify, and “grow” loving feelings, which are then applied to self and others. With practice, this exercise of focusing and encouraging loving affects—even independent of its spiritual or religious intention—appears to make such feelings more experientially salient and easily generated, perhaps especially when mindfulness is also present.

REFLECTIONS FOR THE HELPER

- Sit for a minute or two with your eyes closed. Allow your mind to settle down a bit. Focus on the breath, letting your tasks and concerns fall away for just a little while.
- Bring your attention to what you do for a living. Consider all the people you see who suffer and the work you do to help them, whether through psychotherapy, medicine, spiritual guidance, or being a parent or friend to someone struggling with life. Reflect on your intentions for these people: that they suffer less, that they be happy, that they have some sense of peace in their lives.
- Allow your compassion to grow—all these beings, caught in painful circumstance, in one way or another doing the best they can. Send caring feelings to them, and to yourself, as someone not that different, although perhaps more fortunate at this specific moment.
- Bring one of these people to mind—someone whose difficulties are especially significant to you right now. Let yourself feel what he or she feels, see what he or she sees. Try not to get lost in this person’s suffering; watch it from the grounded, caring place that you have established. Allow yourself to feel the pain but not get caught in it.

- Reflect on this person’s experience when you have been hurt or hurt others, certainly part of being human. Change or depart. Feel the pain at this moment in time, in all its fullness.
- Embrace any gratitude that you have, are, doing what you are doing. A gift, although it may not always be experienced as the honor of being needed. It could have gone differently. It could have been less meaningful or beneficial. Help, how lucky you are that you are here.

Nonmeditative Compassion

Outside of (or in addition to) meditation, compassion can be learned more didactically (Gilbert, 2009a, 2009b), for example, through a teaching and intervention approach that differs from significant shame, such as in the case of a detailed description of a learnable skill set that provides information about the nature of compassionate attributes (e.g., judgment) and skills (e.g., compassion, and compassionate skills may be especially helpful in light of CFT’s attention to the consequences (Gilbert, 2009b).

In a less structured way, training clinicians to appreciate suffering, impermanence, and many Buddhist traditions, such as with his or her teacher and aspects of *dharma* (i.e., the teachings explicated by the Buddha) in the context of books, CDs, and DVDs, as His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama (Tara Brach (2003; see also Chödrön Zinn (1994), and Jack Kornfield (1994).

Such didactic and experiential approaches in explicating *dependent co-arising* can arise from concrete conditions.

- Reflect on this person's experience. Note that it is not a bad thing to hurt when you have been hurt. This person's distress may be part of recovery, certainly part of being alive. It is ultimately transient; it will, inevitably, change or depart. Feel the honor that you can be present with this person at this moment in time, in all the complexity of pain and caring.
- Embrace any gratitude that arises. How lucky you are to be where you are, doing what you are doing. Your occupation or relationship is a special gift, although it may not always seem that way. See if you can directly experience the honor of being able to intervene in the suffering of others. It could have gone differently. You might have ended up doing something less meaningful or beneficial. Remember how you've always wanted to help, how lucky you are that you can.

Nonmeditative Compassion Training

Outside of (or in addition to) meditation, certain aspects of compassion can be learned more didactically. In compassion-focused therapy (CFT; Gilbert, 2009a, 2009b), for example, an entire therapeutic philosophy and intervention approach has been developed to treat clients who suffer from significant shame, self-criticism, and depression (see Chapter 18 for a detailed description of CFT). Gilbert contends that compassion is a learnable skill set that provides the clinician with ways to foster a range of compassionate attributes (e.g., caring for well-being, empathy, and non-judgment) and skills (e.g., compassionate attention, compassionate reasoning, and compassionate behavior). It is likely that these attitudes and skills may be especially helpful in work with trauma survivors—especially in light of CFT's attention to adults with childhood maltreatment experiences (Gilbert, 2009b).

In a less structured way, compassion also may be increased by helping clinicians to appreciate the existential validity of phenomena such as suffering, impermanence, interdependence, and nonego-centric love. In many Buddhist traditions, this insight develops as the student interacts with his or her teacher and studies, reflects, and meditates on various aspects of *dharma* (i.e., the true nature of reality/existence, typically as explicated by the Buddha). In our culture, this may also take place within the context of books, CDs, and DVDs offered by traditional teachers such as His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama (1998) or Western writers such as Tara Brach (2003; see also Chapter 2), Pema Chödrön (2000), Jon Kabat-Zinn (1994), and Jack Kornfield (2008b).

Such didactic and exploratory exercises are often especially helpful in explicating *dependent arising*, the notion that experience and behavior arise from concrete conditions and causes (Bodhi, 2005), as opposed to