

## Converting Pain to Love

.This is a great practice for developing compassion and equanimity. It is also a great practice for healing a sense of emptiness, self-hatred, or insufficiency. If you have been wounded or are otherwise in pain, this is a very healing practice.

I suggest you always start this practice with your own pain. You may need to focus on your own pain for many days, weeks, or months. As you strengthen your experience of love and care for yourself, you will be able to then breathe in and dissolve the pain of others, sending your loving energy out into the world.

What happens as a result of this practice is that you will begin to feel more loving towards yourself and others as you go about your day. This practice develops a generosity of heart. You will find yourself breathing out love to everyone you interact with. You will begin to radiate out kindness. Others will sense and appreciate this. With time, you will trigger with this and the other practices in this chapter a virtuous resonance of loving and being loved.

1. Get present with the presence practice. As you do this, relax. Let go of tension. Take a few, deep, slow breaths. Anchor awareness in the breath or some other anchor. Let the mind settle as much as is possible. Breathe out and let go of tensions or agitation as much as possible.
2. Close your eyes if you wish.

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3. Once you are feeling present and as centered as possible, imagine your sources of love filling your heart with a radiant, glowing ball of love. Refer to the benefactor meditation. Tap into the loving sources that work best for you: loving people in your life, loving beings that you know of, ideal, divine loving parents, God or others divine beings, or even just a loving universal energy. Whatever works best for you.
4. As you take in the flow of love, sense this radiant, glowing ball of love growing in your heart. Sense the force of love coming into you and filling your heart to the brim with radiant, glowing love energy.
5. Now sense any pain in your heart or elsewhere in your body. You can also now bring to mind circumstances that trigger upset, fear, hurt, grief, sadness, loneliness, anxiety, anger, boredom, restlessness, or any other painful feeling.
6. Now breathe in this pain directly into the radiating ball of love in your heart. Imagine the pain being converted to loving energy. Breath out this loving energy towards yourself into the center of your pain. Imagine your love sources behind you radiating love into your glowing, radiating heart from behind.
7. Breath in the pain, covert it in your loving, radiating heart, and breath out love.
8. If the pain feels too much, just focus on the out breath of love. Release love from your radiating heart, fueled by your love sources, into the vastness of awareness.

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9. When you feel ready, you can then bring to mind someone else who is also suffering. One person you care about who is having a hard time. Sense what it is like for them. Let yourself fully experience their pain as much as you can. Breathe in their pain, let it be converted in your glowing heart, and breathe out love to them.

10. At the end of this practice, sense the pain of all those who suffer. Breathe in their pain and breathe out love.

11. As you finish, make an intention to continue to tap into your glowing heart and to keep it radiating. Make an intention to breathe in both your pain and the pain of everyone you encounter today and to convert it to loving energy. Make an intention to live with love on every breath.

In bringing this practice into your daily life, it is helpful to practice attending to the essential goodness and vulnerability in everyone. Look closely. See if you can discern the conditioning of others that causes them suffering. Attend to their vulnerability and to the divine spirit that shines through. Sense both your and their sacredness. As you encounter pain, breathe this pain into your radiating heart and breathe out love.

I am indebted to Caroline Alioto (Lama Palden Drolma) and others who have taught me this practice. Lama Palden's book, "Love on Every Breath," describes this practice from a Buddhist perspective.

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