

Taking Refuge in a Loving Presence

This practice is a great practice for when you are troubled and are in pain.

1. Get into a comfortable, relaxed, alert position. Your eyes can be closed or have a downward gaze. You can do this and other reverence practices lying down if you are not sleepy.
2. Using the presence practice (above) to get still, and present. Take some slow, deep, relaxing breaths. Use your breath to anchor your attention.
3. If you wish, you can close your eyes.
4. Feel a pain that is calling for healing. It could be anything: self-hatred, anxiety, doubt, fear, anger, hurt, loneliness, emptiness, depression, or self-criticism. Note where you may feel it in your body. Note any tension and see if you can breathe some of the tension away. Usually with pain there are thoughts and stories. What stories does the mind tell you? Note stories of harm done to you or by you. Note any future event you fear and stories of how harm will come to pass. Allow your breath to help you stay with what is most strong. Sense it from the inside out. Try to note what is the core longing within you. Is it to be loved, to be understood, to be accepted, to be appreciated, to be valued, to be understood, to be cared for, or to be safe? Note, if possible, any core fear or painful feeling. For most of us, this comes down to a fear that we are not worthy, lovable, safe, or loved.
5. Now imagine a healing place, or a sacred space for you. It could be a place in nature or a special building. You can make up a place in your imagination if you'd like.
6. Now sense the presence of a wise, loving being. It could be a very loving person in your life. It could be a loving person like the Dalai Lama, Mother Theresa, or Fred Rogers, or a divine being like God, Jesus, or an intelligent loving spirit. Experience belonging and connection with this sacred being.
7. Imagine being filled with warmth, acceptance, and kindness from this loving being.
8. Imagine now bringing your pain and troubles to this wise, loving being.

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9. Sense what is most asking for a healing attention in your life. Ask yourself what you are believing about yourself that is causing suffering.
10. Let yourself feel the fullness of what this is like. What are you most needing in this moment? To feel safe? To feel loved? To be seen? To be forgiven? To be accepted?
11. Let what you need be a prayer or wish to the loving presence. Express and communicate your longing. Sense what you most want to feel.
12. Now imagine what you most long for being offered by your wise and loving being. Put your hand on your heart to receive. Let it flow into the most wounded places of your being. Let your hurt, fear, pain, or sorrow dissolve into this merciful presence.
13. Let body, heart, and mind release into and merge into oneness with this loving being. Let their form dissolve. Let there just be the felt sense of a loving presence. Be loving awareness. You are the holder and the held. Feel yourself to be the ocean of loving awareness that is holding the waves of your pain and other experiences on the surface. Feel the currents. Feel their belonging to the whole of the ocean of loving awareness.
14. When you are ready, you can open your eyes and become present with your surroundings. See if you can keep the sense of this loving being's presence within you as you go about the rest of your day.

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