

COMPASSION FOR YOURSELF

Bring to mind times you have felt cared about by people, pets or spiritual beings, in your life today or in the past. Any kind of caring for you counts, such as times you were included, seen, appreciated, liked or even loved. Relax and open yourself to feeling cared about. If you get distracted, come back to feeling cared about. Stay with these feelings and sense them sinking in, like water into a sponge.

Then think about one or more people you have compassion for - perhaps a child in pain, a friend going through a divorce, or refugees on the other side of the world. Get a sense of their burdens, worries and suffering. Feel a warm-heartedness, a sympathetic concern. You could have thoughts such as, "May your pain ease...may you find work...may you get through this illness." Give yourself over to compassion, letting it fill you and flow through you.

Now that you know what compassion feels like, apply it to yourself. Recognize any ways that you feel stressed, tired, ill, mistreated or unhappy. Then bring compassion to yourself as you would to a friend who felt like you do. Know that everyone suffers and that you are not alone in your pain. You could have thoughts such as, "May I not suffer...may these hurt feelings pass...may I not worry so much...may I heal from this illness." Imagine compassion like a warm rain coming down over you.