

## HANDOUT 8

### CONNECTING WITH THE SUFFERING OF OTHERS

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- Start by taking a few moments to allow yourself to settle. Use the anchor of the breath, sounds, or touch points to ground the attention and come into the present moment.
  - Bring awareness to your experience of pain, either physical or emotional. Don't try to fix it or make it go away. See if you can lean into the experience. Notice what you are feeling. See if you can locate this feeling in the body.
  - Pause for a moment and see if you can step back from the details of the story. If a strong feeling arises—anger, grief, sadness—note this with warmth and compassion.
  - Take a few breaths and see if you can soften around the pain or suffering. See if there is any resistance in your body or mind. See if this, too, can soften. Try not to fight or struggle against it.
  - Don't judge the experience or yourself. Allow yourself to have the full range of feelings, even if they are difficult to bear.
  - Realize that you are not alone with these feelings or this experience. Know that there are many other people in the world with the same pain and the same suffering. Let this connect you with the other human beings who are feeling this way. Before this experience you could not have understood the suffering of these others. Now you can deepen your understanding.
  - Allow compassion to arise, both for yourself and for all the other people who are in similar pain. Allow yourself to rest in this compassion. As the wish to ease suffering arises, say to yourself: *May all beings be free from suffering. May all beings know peace* (or similar phrases). Allow this to be an opening to a deeper connection with others.
  - See if you can allow the separation between yourself and other suffering beings to begin to dissolve. Open to a state of oneness and spaciousness, letting things be as they are without trying to fix anything. Rest in the awareness of the present moment, letting thoughts and feelings arise and dissolve like clouds in an open sky.
  - When you are ready, take a few deep breaths, stretch, wiggle fingers and toes, and open your eyes if they have been closed. See if you can carry a sense of the universality of pain into your encounters with others.
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