

# Tibetan compassion practices: working with terror, trauma and transcendence liter...

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The traditional Buddhist practices of compassion are a way of helping people undergoing traumatic and terrorizing event to integrate and accept their emotions into their lives. These practices include tantric visualization, mind awareness, and calming relaxation. In many spiritual traditions, it is said that in times of great difficulty and adversity, people have the most potential. Adversity offers a perfect opportunity for attaining enlightenment, but difficult times do not always lead to enlightenment. In fact, when things get really difficult, it leads to a big mess and a lot of neurosis. This is because people get squeezed.

A single event like the US bombing in September 11 is likely to bring out the best in people. However, when it recurs for a long period, people will cave in. The stress, strain and thought of it start to bring out, at the very least, people's grouching and meanness. The Buddhist emphasizes that people such a situation causes to become more self absorbed and self centered. This is because they want to fend off the discomfort. Basically, they fear the discomfort, express dislike for it, and wish to get rid of it.

As a result people respond in a number of ways which are counterproductive to the happiness they seek. They get resentful, bitter, angry, and greedy among other negative emotions. They tend to do that out of a kind of vulnerability and wish to protect themselves from the pain they are feeling. But the result of it is that they feel more and constricted, cut off, alienated, and unhappy. This is a common experience when under stress or strain. The stress tends to bring out the worst in us. This whole body of Buddhist teaching says that with a certain instruction and encouragement, these very same times of adversity can wake people up and open their hearts and

minds. It can also connect them with the openness of our hearts and the openness of their minds.

Whenever people face some difficulty or tragedy, they always put hope on a mysterious being. In most cases this is a supernatural being that cannot be explained in natural terms. In about two hundred years, science and technology developed and fulfilled what many human beings wished for. True prayer was just meant for hope. Often this hope was just but empty hope. This was the effect of what science and technology really brought. People put their faith only in science and technology. They spend all their lives relying on material values. The 20th century is considered the most important century of human history until now. This was the century that most serious violence that affected all of humanity took place. Historians estimated that more than 200 million people were killed during the violence. Advance weapons of mass destruction were developed and used during this period. This includes nuclear weapons, chemical weapons, and heavy machinery weapons.

The weapons were among the greatest achievements of science and technology in the 20th century. But this great achievement in science and technology failed to solve human problems. Instead it created more problems and a lot of destruction. Human beings became even more fearful especially after the event at the climax of Second World War. Many people all across the globe became fearful. The blame cannot be laid on science and technology but on the users of science and technology. This is because science and technology can be used for constructive purposes in order to help solve problems in the society. However, at the same time, science and

technology can be abused by its users thereby bringing more problems to humanity.

It is obvious that the world today is full of tragic moment and adversities. However, through the Tibetan compassion practices, there are ways in which to integrate and accept these moments of adversities and difficulty in life. The practices include tantric visualization, mind awareness, calming relaxation. These practices are aimed at identification of painful emotions and aspects of our mental life.

Trauma is considered to be subjective and can best be described in the context of an individual's own perception. This implies that what one considers to be traumatizing may not be the same for another. However, trauma is just but a perception of threat based on an individual. It triggers a certain reaction that is expressed out in the form of fear.

Exercising these practices helps one to be more self aware and compassionate. They help one to find a place of peace and ease no matter what is happening in their lives. That is a huge change for human beings, that no matter the ups and downs of life, there is a place of peace that people can find. Mindful awareness has become a common practice. It has been brought into schools, corporations, into the medical world, into law, and into all different kind of fields. This is because mindfulness is a very simple practice with something that anyone can do regardless of their background, religion, culture, belief system, and affiliations. It is simply the practice of paying attention. It not something easy to do, but it is very simple.

There has been a lot of research in relation to the practice of mindfulness. For the last decade or so, the number of studies has grown by a hundred

fold. From research, mindfulness has been seen to have an impact on physical health, mental health, and attention. One study sought to investigate the response of people with psoriasis when they listen to meditation tapes. There was an experimental group that was placed under the intervention of meditation while the control group was placed under normal intervention for the illness. The result of this study was intriguing as it was established that the experimental group healed three times faster than the control group. This implied that a combination of the practice of meditation with conventional medical intervention increases the rate of healing for patients with psoriasis.

Therefore it is interesting that mind awareness can boost the immune system, impact stress related conditions, and be quite helpful with physical issues related tests. It also impacts emotional wellbeing. In an interesting study that was recently done using cell phones, the researchers met random respondents from all over the world and ask them three questions: what are you doing right now, is your mind on it, and how do you feel? What the study found out is that if these people had their mind on what they were doing, they reported more happiness than when their mind was away. The happiness was expressed even if the respondents were doing something they did not like. Interesting enough, even if the respondents were thinking about things in the future that would give them more pleasure, they were less happier than when they focused on the things that they were doing in the present. This research revealed that staying in the present moment creates more happiness. It is useful for people with anxiety, depression, and a whole host of mental issues.

Another notable study was done to compare the brains of people who have used mediation for long with people who have never utilized the practice of mindfulness. The respondents belonged in the same age group. The study found out that the people who do not use mindfulness have thinned out brains. The human brain thins out as people grow older. The size of the cortical layers reduces. On the other hand, the people who meditate and use the practice of mindfulness, their cortical layers did not decline. The same research reveals that meditation is helpful no matter the duration. Even for people who have meditated in as little as 8 weeks, the structure of their brain was found to be different in the areas related to executive functioning, decision making, and flexible thinking.

Mindfulness can be defined as paying attention to present experiences with openness and curiosity. Many times, people fail to pay attention to present experiences. It is common testimony that many people either pay attention to their past or to the future. The mind mostly thinks about things that happened in the past, replaying the events over and over. This leads to obsession, worry, and regrets. The mind can also be thinking in the future by planning, developing anxiety about an event, and worrying about uncertainties. So the mind, kind off, swings to and fro these two places, the past and the future. This is where stress lies. Stress has an impact on the mind, but it is the mind that takes people out of the present and makes them more stressed out. With the practice of mindfulness, the attention is brought to the present moment in order to create a place of peace and ease.

The art of mindfulness is something that almost everyone has ever gone through during childhood. However, as people get more experience,

education, and wisdom, they focus a lot on so many things to the point where they fail to get in touch with the present. The mind of humans can be compared to the sky; the difficulties and adversities compared to the clouds that come to cover the mind. People can learn to become more identified with the sky and not the clouds that obscure the sky. Humans can learn to connect with their true nature. This is what mindfulness teaches.

Through the practices of compassion, people can go into their moment of trauma and gradually allow themselves to release emotions that are held up inside. In effect, this will lead to a sense of freedom in living and help reduce the possibility of individuals engaging in destructive patterns of behavior. Both visualization and meditation have the potential to restore well being to people going through terror and traumatic situations. They have a sense to connect people with what is called the inner source which anchors one to the traumatic memory and helps to release it gradually and respectfully. Safety is created once the inner source is established.

## **References**

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