

Traditional “Sending and Taking”, “Tonglen” Instructions (given by Ven. Pema Chodron)

Sending and taking is a very important practice of the Bodhisattva path. It is called Tonglen in Tibetan: ‘tong’ means ‘sending out’ or ‘letting go’ and ‘len’ means ‘receiving’ or ‘accepting’. ‘Tonglen’ is a very important term; you should remember it. It is the main practice in the development of relative Bodhicitta.

The practice of tonglen is actually quite straightforward ; it is an actual sitting meditation practice. You give away your happiness, your pleasure, anything that feels good. All of that goes out with the outbreath. As you breathe in, you breathe in any resentments and problems, anything that feels bad. The whole point is to remove territoriality altogether Tonglen as a formal meditation practice has four stages

1. First, rest your mind briefly, for a second or two, in a state of openness or stillness. This stage is traditionally called flashing on absolute

bodhicitta, or suddenly opening to basic spaciousness and clarity.

2. Second, work with texture. Breathe in a feeling of hot, dense, smoky, and heavy-a sense of claustrophobia-and breathe out a feeling of cool, bright, and light-a sense of freshness. Breathe in completely, through all the pores of your body, and breathe out, radiate out, completely, through all the pores of your body. Do this until it feels synchronized with your in- and out-breaths.

3. Third, work with a personal situation-any painful situation that’s real to you. Traditionally you begin by doing tonglen for someone you care about and wish to help, child, family member, pet. Recollect someone dear to you for whom you would naturally take on their suffering, lifting it from them if it were possible. However, if you are stuck, you can do the practice for the pain you are feeling and simultaneously for all those just like you who feel that kind of suffering. For instance, if you are feeling inadequate, you breathe that in for yourself and all the others in the same boat, and you send out confidence and adequacy or relief in any form you wish.

4. Finally, expand the situation, make the taking in and sending out bigger. If you are doing tonglen for someone you love, extend it out to those who are in the same situation as your friend. If you are doing tonglen for

someone you see on television or on the street, do it for all the others in the same boat. Make it bigger than just that one person. If you are doing tonglen for all those who are feeling the anger or fear or whatever that you are trapped in, maybe that's big enough. But you could go further in all these cases. You could do tonglen for people you consider to be your enemies-those who hurt you or hurt others. Do tonglen for them, thinking of them as having the same confusion and stuckness as your friend or yourself. Breathe in their pain and send them relief.

Tonglen can extend infinitely. As you do the practice, gradually over time your compassion naturally expands, and so does your realization that things are not as solid as you thought. As you do this practice, gradually at your own pace, you will be surprised to find yourself more and more able to be there for others even in what used to seem like impossible situations.

“Using Wisdom and Courage”: “Tonglen in times of crisis”

USING WISDOM AND COURAGE

Repeat this often, without expectation or fear, in order to train the mind. This is one of the most well-known verses practiced by many great bodhisattvas, through which they achieved excellent results. This is a special method to free ourselves from hope and fear so that we can transmute suffering into the path of enlightenment.

If I am supposed to get sick, let me get sick, And I'll be happy.
May this sickness purify my negative karma
And the sickness of all sentient beings.

If I am supposed to be healed, let all my sickness and confusion be healed,
And I'll be happy.
May all sentient being be healed
And filled with happiness.

If I am supposed to die, let me die,
And I'll be happy.
May all the delusion
And the causes of suffering of beings die.

If I am supposed to live a long life, let me live a long live, And I'll be happy.
May my life be meaningful
In service to sentient beings.

Khenchen Konchog Gyaltshens personal “Tonglen” instruction verses

Excerpt from

With a positive attitude of loving-kindness and compassion, I give to the down-trodden Sentient beings of the six realms all my happiness and Roots of virtue, without reservation.

With a natural manner of brave heart-mind, I take into my mind-stream every one of the Qualities of abandonment and realization of all the Buddhas and bodhisattvas of the three times.

In samsara, from beginningless time through today, the Sole cause bringing suffering is always my own Self-fixation / fundamental non-knowing; I release this, right now, without a second thought.

Knowing that all sentient beings of the three realms have been my mother, I recall their kindness, wish to repay their kindness, and connect to them with love; I generate compassion for them, then the mindset to attain enlightenment for their sake – I take all these mind-trainings into the center of my heart.

Without clinging or attachment, I give my entire Bounty of resources and roots of virtue to these kind mothers; And in an authentic manner – like an illusion, like a mirage – I take on all their karma, afflictions, and suffering.

Negative conditions are spiritual teachers; Spirits and demons are emanations of conquerors; Sickness is a broom sweeping away defilements and obscurations – All sufferings are dharmata's waves.