

Tonglen for the Self.
(Based on the Tibetan Practice of Tonglen)

Sit in a relaxed position – allow yourself to settle and connect in with the sensations of your body. You might want to simply bring your attention to the breath for a few minutes: Breathing in and breathing out with no other agenda than being with the experience of your body breathing. After a few minutes consider the divine aspect of your being – yourself as the embodiment of enlightened compassion – sitting as you are.

[If you find this hard, then imagine a being who symbolises enlightened compassion, such as Christ, the Buddha or any other figure that works for you. Imagine this being somewhere just above your head – picturing them with some detail – and then imagine the figure sinking down and becoming one with you – so that you begin to sense within your own being the quality of compassion that you associate with this being.]

Directly in front of you visualise the ‘ordinary’ aspect of yourself – the ‘I’ that is suffering, that feels lonely, frightened, angry or self-critical.

As you gaze towards your ‘ordinary’ self and become aware of the suffering you have been carrying, allow a deep warmth and tenderness to arise, a sense of friendship and unconditional love. You accept the suffering of your ‘ordinary’ self without judgment or the need to change it in any way. Your awareness of this suffering opens your heart and generates a fearless wish to release and transform the suffering of the ‘ordinary’ you.

Consider this suffering as a dark cloud and with each in-breath visualise yourself breathing it in. Take the dark cloud of suffering into your heart, where you feel the radiant quality of universal compassion shining like a bright sun. Allow the dark cloud to melt away in the warmth of your heart.

When you breath out wish for your ‘ordinary’ self unconditional love, joy and self-acceptance, in the form of a bright light, travelling from your divine aspect to the self that suffers. Continue this giving and receiving with each breath for as long as you like. *(Alternatively you may want to spend several minutes simply receiving and dissolving the suffering, followed by several minutes of giving back unconditional love, joy and self-acceptance).*

As you continue the practice, visualise the ‘ordinary’ aspect of yourself gradually becoming relieved of suffering and filling with well-being and warmth.

Each time you conclude, consider that the practice has been completely successful: the ‘ordinary’ aspect of you is relieved of all suffering and is now radiantly happy and at peace. Since there is now no difference between these two aspects, dissolve the visualisation and remain sitting for a few minutes longer, or as long as you wish to take.