

AABCAP



The Four Immeasurables in Buddhism and Psychotherapy

MODULE 4: Day 1

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‘The Four Immeasurables Boundless Heart

- Metta – Love
- Karuna – Compassion
- Mudita – Joy
- Upekkha – Equanimity

Immeasurables

They are called immeasurable because there is no end to their cultivation. With practice these qualities can continue to expand and embrace your life and the world. These divine abodes are also the natural expression of an awakened heart-mind.

Benefits of Practicing the Four Immeasurables

- Practicing the immeasurable mind of love extinguishes anger in the hearts of living beings.
- Practicing compassion extinguishes all sorrows and anxieties.
- Practicing joy extinguishes sadness and joylessness in the heart.
- Practicing equanimity extinguishes aversion and sticky attachment.

Dharmapada

- A peaceful heart gives birth to love
- When love meets suffering, it turns to compassion
- When love meets happiness, it turns to joy
- Love, compassion and joy find their home in equanimity

Benefits of Practicing Metta

- One sleeps well, free of nightmares
- Upon waking, one feels light of heart
- More relaxed
- Bright and clear complexion
- Person is well liked
- She/he is dear to animals
- Easier to establish meditation and concentration of mind
- At the time of death, one's mind is clear

Metta – Loving-Kindness

- Far enemy (opposite) is hatred and ill will
- Near enemy (similar) is sensual desire, clinging attachment, & sentimentality

Metta – Loving-Kindness

“Hatred never ceases by hatred,
but by love alone is healed. This
is an ancient and eternal law.”

- Dharmapada

4 dimensions to polishing the radiant heart

- Being kind and loving to oneself
- Learning to receive love
- Altruistic - Being kind and loving to others
- Universal - Abiding in the boundless heart of love

Loving-Kindness Prayer

- May I/you be free from fear and the causes of fear
- May I/you be touched by the power of love
- May I/you be well in body-heart and mind
- May I/you learn to take care of yourself joyfully
- May I/you learn to live in harmony with others
- May I/you be peaceful and happy
- May I/you abide in the boundless heart of love



Loving others

Rainer M. Rilke

- "For one human being to love another human being: that is perhaps the most difficult task that has been entrusted to us, the ultimate task, the final test and proof, the work for which all other work is merely preparation".
(Rilke, 1984, letter 7)

Embodying the boundless heart of love

- Love is a practice, a choice, a path. No one can take away your freedom to choose. You can choose *The Way of Love*. It is not a matter of 'falling in love' but one of 'standing in love'. You can choose to keep your heart open even in the face of adversity and challenges.

Traditional Practice of metta

- Starts with oneself, generating kind and caring thoughts
- towards oneself
- Then visualising loved ones
- Extend metta to friends
- Extend to strangers
- Extend to someone you have a difficult relationship with
- Extend to all beings in all directions

Clinical Application of Loving-kindness for Therapist

- Engage in non-judgmental, open minded response
- Hold safe kind, loving presence for self and other within appropriate boundaries
- Empathy and rapport –unconditional positive regard
Nourish your own loving heart – self care plan

Clinical application – Loving-kindness Client

- Guided practice of loving-kindness is especially helpful for clients with low-self esteem and low self-worth
- Encourage client developing a self-care plan
- Dr. Rick Hanson's practices of 'Taking in the good'
- In the container of the therapeutic alliance the client can then begin to internalize this unconditional positive regard.

Definition of Compassion

- *Karuna* - The quivering of the heart in response to ones own and another beings pain.
- Compassion is a combination of loving-kindness, plus empathy plus generosity and a response.

4 Dimension of Cultivating Compassion

- Compassion for oneself
- Compassion for loved ones and friends
- Altruistic compassion - for others suffering
- Supreme compassion – a natural expression of the selfless heart-mind

Karuna - Compassion

- Far enemy – (opposite) is cruelty, pitilessness, viciousness
- Near enemy (similar but not compassion) is overwhelming grief, pity, blind compassion

What inhibits the flow of compassion

- Fear of being overwhelmed by the suffering
- Rescuing and tendency to fix other
- Aversion to sitting with self or another's pain
- Judgmental attitude of mind

The 3 way flow of compassion

- Self to >>> other
 - Other to >>> self
- Self << >> self

Compassion Fatigue

- Mindfulness without Compassion leads to a cold clinical detached observation
- Compassion without mindfulness can lead to overwhelm
- A lack of compassion for self leads to empathy fatigue

Self- Compassion Practice

- Cultivate mindfulness
- Breathe and soothe
- Be the container for your pain rather than fall into the well of your hurt and sorrow
- Direct compassion into the felt sense of the emotional wound - fear, grief, shame, loss vulnerability, sorrow, pain
- Motto: Attend and befriend

Doorways to develop self-compassion

- Be kind to oneself. Acknowledge. **“I am suffering, I’m going through a hard time”**
- Recognise our common humanity, that suffering and personal inadequacy is part of the shared human experience –
- **“Everyone suffers”**
- Mindfulness & compassionate attention – I have the capacity to turn towards and be present to this difficulty, unpleasant or painful feeling or experience. **“I can be present to this”**.
- Ref: Kristin Neff

Neuro-psychological research

- Mirror neurons help us to feel the emotions, movements and intentions of others. Natural empathy is part of the social brain neural circuitry that connects us intimately to others.
- Increased well-being and happiness to the practitioner of compassion
- Activates the affiliative system of brain, soothes threat system

Supreme Compassion

- **Supreme /Universal Compassion** – is something to aspire to, it combines the heart quality of compassion with wisdom and equanimity.
- Setting ones compass and intention to cultivate compassionate presence is an attitude that underlies the entire path of awakening

Clinical application of compassion

- Increase capacity to be mindful to manage emotional regulation
- Teach the client compassionate crucible
- Encourage client to develop capacity to compassionately turn towards the pain -
- **Attend and Befriend** their own hurt, anguish, sorrow, distress, stress
- Learn self-soothing technique - breathing through

Prayer of Compassion

May you be held in compassion
May you be free from fear and the causes of fear
May your pain and sorrow be eased
May you be at peace