

~ A Guided Meditation for Difficult Moments ~

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Many people ask me very difficult questions, when they are facing maybe one of the most difficult times in their life. Maybe they just broke up with their partner or they just lost their job, or maybe they lost someone they love, or have physical sickness. When all these varieties of difficult situations sometimes unexpectedly come in our lives, what should we do?

I think there are a few things that we can do. The first important thing is to try to accept it. The more you resist, the more you try to fight with it, what happens? You feel it is more difficult. So we practice with what we call “impermanence.”

Then, second, you can connect with love and compassion. It is not like that difficult thing is something only you are experiencing. Suffering is international, universal. And once in a while, everybody experiences the most difficult situation in their lifetime. So, feel empathy, sympathy, and practice loving-kindness and compassion. Understand them.

Then appreciate that “Maybe I lost my job/Maybe I lost my partner, but I still have my life.” There are so many things. Maybe you still have your friends or family, or you still have a roof above you.

Then next is to ask, “What can I learn from this now?”

So we can do so many things with difficult situations. Maybe I will do a little bit of guided meditation so we can practice this together.

First, please keep your spine loosely straight and then be wherever you are on the chair or cushion, in your bed, or outside in nature. It does not matter. Or even standing. It does not matter. Or lying down. It does not matter.

Just relax your body and do a deep breathing exercise. A little bit of deep breathing.

Relax in between the breaths.

Another deep breath.

Another deep breath.

Now, feel the sensation in your body. Warm, cold, heavy, light, painful, peaceful, whatever. If you feel something in the body, just feel it.

And now be aware that your breath is changing. The lungs and chest are also changing, contracting and expanding. Your heartbeat is changing. Your blood circulation is changing. Your entire body is changing. Be aware of that.

And your life is changing. Life is up and down, just like the waves of the ocean. Up is good. We feel happy and inspired. But actually, with the downs, we can learn more, grow more, transform more.

So that bad thing that suddenly happened to you — it is normal. It is one of the moments of life. Accept it. Let it go. But do not give up. You still have great capacity. Everybody has potential, skills, power. Everybody has awareness, love and compassion, and wisdom. So appreciate that you are still alive.

Appreciate whatever senses that you have — you still have eyes, ears, a nose. Maybe you have parents, friends, family, a job. You lost something, but you still have a lot of good things within you and around you. Appreciate those.

As for having an obstacle, you are not alone. Maybe some of your friends are going through another difficult time in their lives. Family members. Your colleagues at work. Everybody. Once in a while, we all experience difficult times. Try to understand that. And wish that we may all be free from these obstacles and suffering. May all of us be happy and have the causes of happiness.

And ask, “Today, through this difficult time, what can I learn?” When I was young, I learned a lot from my panic attacks. Then, my father died.

Of course I felt sad, but I learned a lot from that incident. And then I went on a wandering retreat, and I myself almost died from food poisoning. I did not give up. I continued to learn, continued to transform. That experience became one of the best experiences in my life. When I came back from my wandering retreat, I saw an earthquake had damaged my entire monastery. Then I asked the question “What can I learn from this?” So now my monastery has been transformed and is much, much better than before, and it benefits so many people. Then there was COVID. I did not give up. I asked, “What can I learn from this? How can I grow from this?” Actually, it really helped my own practice. I did a lot of online teaching, took care of my health, and farmed an organic farm. I did so many things.

So think about that opposite aspect for yourself. Think about how to make obstacles become opportunities and problems become solutions.

Now please open your eyes and rest your mind and body for a few seconds. Let your mind be as it is.

Okay. If we practice that way, we are learning acceptance, wisdom of impermanence, and the power of letting go from this difficult situation. Not only that — we are connecting with love and compassion, appreciation, and joy.

Also, if you learn from this, then you will develop wisdom in life. After a few months, you might think, “Wow, that obstacle really changed my life.” It can happen. Of course, then you might still feel hurt, sad, or depressed. You might want to cry. Let yourself cry. It is okay. Do not suppress it, but do not totally get lost. Come back to your awareness, love and compassion, and wisdom. Let it go, but do not give up.

Thank you.