



LA TIMES
BEST
SELLER

LOVE — AND — RAGE

THE PATH OF LIBERATION
THROUGH ANGER

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SKILLFUL MOURNING

In my healing I am also mourning. Sometimes I am in despair. Mourning and despair are very private matters. It is my acknowledgment that there is suffering. It is my honoring of my discomfort as well as the discomfort of everyone else in the world.

—LAMA ROD OWENS, *Radical Dharma*

*The trauma said, “Don’t write these poems.
Nobody wants to hear you cry about the grief inside your bones.”*

—ANDREA GIBSON

MUCH OF MY FREEDOM and joy is bound up in my capacity to mourn. Mourning is my attempt to acknowledge heartbrokenness, accept it, and offer it space to be in my experience so it may do its work of teaching me and passing through. Whenever I feel this energy, I allow it; and it is something that I am encouraging others to do as well. When we are sitting with someone, it is an expression of compassion to offer them the space to move through their heartbrokenness.

In my practice, I'm trying to be in power with my heartbrokenness. This means that I meet my woundedness, my discomfort, with a kind of friendliness. This friendliness is an expression of love, and that love is the energy that opens up the space around the discomfort.

WORKING WITH CRISIS

When we get bad news about someone we love, initially we may feel a really intense tightness or mental contraction. It's like being shocked. After that, we have the opportunity to relax into the crisis, even though that feels really intense to do. That relaxing is not an expression of not caring. It's not an expression of apathy. It's actually an expression of trying to be in wisdom, or trying to experience wisdom or clarity, which will help us make the best choices to be in a relationship with that crisis, or to handle the crisis, really.

That's what we're going for, and it's quite uncomfortable. If we get thrown into something, it's as if we're sinking, and it's hard. It's a really interesting instruction to be told, "If you find yourself sinking within everything that comes up within a crisis, just relax. Sink some more." This relaxing helps us to float above, or around, the thing itself. Now, the thing itself doesn't go away. However, you are giving it space now, and that's where we will experience different potentialities.

Now the crisis itself isn't dictating everything. We become a resource for other people.

BASIC MOURNING PRACTICE

The basis of this practice is space, holding space, and allowing ourselves to experience grief. In experiencing grief within

spaciousness, we are able to allow grief to move through our experience, and we can slowly experience liberation over time from this energy.

Type of Practice

This practice uses the Seven Homecomings, earth touching, breath practice, and other visualization practices.

THE PRACTICE

1. Start by moving through the beginning practice sequence, ending with a breath practice.
2. Continuing with the breath, breathe deeply in through the nose and out through the mouth. Try to make both the inhale and the exhale as deep as possible. After a few minutes, take a two-second pause after the inhale through the nose before releasing the exhale through the mouth. Gradually make that pause longer, up to five to ten seconds, or however long is comfortable for you. In the pause between the breaths, notice the space and stillness that that opens up. If you can, try to rest in between those breaths. As you continue resting in the pauses, try to start experiencing the breaths as well as the pauses. Let the breath breathe you, and while doing so allow it to move you into a deeper sense of spaciousness and calm. Practice with the breaths as long as you want to.
3. Now move into evoking the Seven Homecomings and your circle of care.

4. Imagine that your circle begins to generate the energy of care for you, and feel that energy filling the space around you as warmth. Feel that warmth gently hold you and wrap you; and slowly begin to feel that energy of kindness, this warmth from your benefactors, slowly begin to sink into the body beneath the layer of skin into the muscles, the bones, and the organs as if you're being marinated in this energy of kindness. As you're breathing, imagine that you're breathing this kindness into your body and lungs; and when that kindness gets into your lungs, imagine this energy begins to circulate throughout the whole body in the same way oxygen is taken in by the lungs and distributed throughout all the cells in the body. Imagine the same thing is happening with this energy of kindness, that every cell gets fed by this energy. In the same way that you are being held by the energy of the earth, allow yourself to be held by the energy of kindness from your benefactors. Relax, open, and continue breathing.
5. In your experience right now there is comfort, as well as discomfort, but looking at the discomfort, what are you calling discomfort right now? Is it physical pain? Is it emotional discomfort? Is it sadness? Is it frustration? Is it anger? Is it despair? Is it a broken heart? Notice the discomfort, and just imagine directing the energy of the kindness from your benefactors into the experience of that discomfort. You can imagine that this energy is holding the discomfort.

Maybe you can imagine that this energy is trying to dissolve this discomfort, or you can imagine that you're directing this energy into the very heart of the discomfort, attempting to fill it up with kindness from your benefactors, and filling up this discomfort in the same way this energy of kindness is filling up your body.

6. Within the context of this kindness that you're experiencing from your benefactors, can you move a little bit further and allow this discomfort space to be in your experience? Can you accept it? Can you let it be there? Can you continue to take care of it with this energy of kindness? Can you let yourself experience this discomfort, and can you let yourself be held by the energy of kindness as you are experiencing it? Or can you let yourself fall into being held by this kindness as you fall apart?
7. Do you see your experience as an experience, not as who you inherently are? Keep breathing. You can even begin to send this energy of kindness back to a moment, to a time when you were hurt and didn't know how to deal with the hurt.
8. Now think about the younger version of yourself, that age you were when you were deeply hurt somehow, and when that part of yourself stopped growing. Returning back to that younger version of yourself, send this energy of kindness to them, helping them to hold space, to experience, and even to release the old hurts, all while falling back into being held by your benefactors within this energy of kindness, and falling back to the earth and being held by the earth.

9. Allow yourself to return back to the present if you're in the past, and turn your attention away from the discomfort back into your circle of benefactors around you. Imagine that your circle of benefactors begin to dissolve into this energy of kindness, compassion, and love that's been around you. Imagine that you absorb all this remaining energy into your heart's center. Return back to being held by the earth, and as you keep some intention anchored into the earth, turn the remaining attention back to your breath, and breathe any way that's comfortable for you right now.
10. Move through the ending practice sequence.