

A Tong-len Practice for Difficult Situations

By Kathy Wesley. Based on Khenpo Karthar Rinpoche's instructions. Last Revised 6.18.15

Khenpo Rinpoche's Original Instructions

When faced with a really difficult person or situation, Khenpo Karthar Rinpoche suggested this practice:

“It is important for you to cultivate compassion in this situation. You should think of compassion whenever you remember (this person or situation). When you have a really difficult situation with a person (or any other being), there is a good chance that this being was connected to you in a past life, and that you caused some harm to this being in that past life. In this way, there could be a sense of karmic debt in your relationship to the being.

“If you can, you should recite the refuge prayer. When you recite it, you should not think, ‘may the Three Jewels protect me from this being.’ You should, rather, ask for equal protection for yourself and for the being you see as harming you.

“Also, you should think that whatever you have and own, you should send this (through your mind) as an offering to that being.

“You should know that the being is the same as you, and only wants happiness. You should pray that this being's karma is purified.

“For example, if you see a dog, and beat that dog with a stick, the dog will never be your friend. But if you give the dog treats, slowly the dog will become your friend.”

This form of Tong-len can be practiced in the following way:

Step One: Imagine the person you are in conflict with as being in front of you. Think that the Buddha, insubstantial and made of light, is in the sky above you and in-between you.

Step Two: Recite the Four-Line Refuge Prayer, asking the Buddha to protect both you and the person you are in conflict with.

Step Three: Create an imaginary gift in your mind. The gift should contain all you have, all you own, your good merit and reputation, etc.

Step Four: Mentally “send” the gift to the person you are in conflict with, who is visualized before you. Think that the person receives it and is made happy. Pray for them to be happy and for their karma to be purified.

Step Five: Dedicate the merit of the practice “to all sentient beings in general, but most especially to this being I am in conflict with.”

Do this practice daily until you feel a shift in your thinking about the person.

(See prayers on Page 2.)

The Four-Line Refuge Prayer:

SANG GYE CHHO DANG TSOG KYI CHHOG NAM LA
In the Buddha, his Teaching and the Order most excellent

JANG CHHUB BAR DU DAG NI KYAB SU CHI
I take my refuge until enlightenment is reached.

DAG GI JIN SOG GYI PAY SO NAM JI
By the merit of generosity and other good deeds,

DRO LA PEN CHHIR SANG GYE DRUB PAR SHO
May I attain enlightenment for the sake of all that lives.

(Recite 3 times)

Dedication of Merit Prayer:

SÖ NAM DI YI THAM CHE ZIK PA NYI
By this merit may all attain omniscience.

THOP NE NYE PAY DRA NAM PAM JE NE
May it defeat the enemy, wrongdoing.

KYE GA NA CHI BA LAP THRUK PA YI
From the stormy waves of birth, old age, sickness and death

SI PAY TSHO LE DRO WA DRÖL WAR SHOK
From the ocean of samsara, may I free all beings.

JAM PAL PA WÖ JI TAR KHYEN PA DANG
The courageous Manjushri, who knows everything as it is,

KÖN TU ZANG PO DE YAN DE ZHIN TE
Samantabhadra, who also knows in the same way,

DE DAK KÜN GYI JE SU DAK LOP CHING
And all the bodhisattvas – that I may follow in their path,

GE WA DI DAK THAM CHE RAP TU NGO
I completely dedicate all this virtue.