

**NAME**

Hert and Compassion Practices Message Vid.mp4

**DATE**

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**DURATION**

28m 50s

**START OF TRANSCRIPT****[00:00:00]**

Good morning, Wellspring's, and it's good to be with you again. Some of you might know that my wife is a professional journalist and what that has meant over the last 11 months of the pandemic, when both she and I have been working almost exclusively from home, is that the news is on here. A lot, a lot, a lot, I mean, literally, what happens on our professional days and we're both working as all head upstairs to the third floor of our house, which is where I'm speaking to you from right now, where throughout the week I will see clients remotely and she'll be downstairs on our first floor in her own newsroom that she's fashioned for herself sometimes throughout the day, in between sessions all wander down on the way to the kitchen to get something to eat. And I'll see her with anywhere between three to five, sometimes more screens, television computer screens, smartphone open with all kinds of news media being received, some of which she is actively in that moment writing and producing. So the news is around and on a lot in our house, try to be mindful about it, try to take intentional breaks, stand back from it. So that we might be able to absorb what's happening in a sustainable way. Now, sometimes because of all that news, it can just feel like this unrelenting stream, ongoing and ongoing and ongoing. But throughout this past year, this almost now 11 months of the pandemic with all that has happened in our world, there have been a few moments that are really kind of stayed with me. One of them was not too long ago. It was a story on CNN by a journalist named Sara Sidner coming out of Los Angeles County. And if you know anything about the course of this novel coronavirus, you know that Los Angeles County in California has been kind of at the devastating epicenter of the effects of covid-19. And Sara Sidner was reporting on a multiple multigenerational family, three generations. That had experienced. The infection's

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With

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Quite a number of their members and deaths across several generations. From people in this family.

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Heartbreaking story.

**[00:02:37]**

Effectively, powerfully delivered. And towards the end of this report, Sara Sidner, who was speaking live on television.

**[00:02:51]**

Started to cry.

**[00:02:53]**

Honestly, openly. Humanely. Just sharing how deeply moved her heart had been by this family that she was reporting on who she got to know in their lives and in their deaths. It stays with me because of what I want to talk about today in this message series that we're calling coming home about various spiritual practices that allow us to return to our breath. And to our bodies, in the midst of the best way I can say it, all this, all this of being alive

**[00:03:35]**

Right now,

**[00:03:37]**

Being alive in a particular way, that these spiritual practices can help us with being alive in a sustainable way, not numbing out or checking out or not being completely overwhelmed by the all of the all of this. The spiritual practices I want to talk about today are often talked about as either compassion practices or sometimes simply called heart practices, there are ways of practicing, practicing, keeping our hearts open in a vulnerable and tender and ongoing sustainable way so we're not checked out or overwhelmed. Many of these hard practices or what are

called the hard practices, emerge out of Buddhism and have been shared beyond the tradition and they form a core of my own personal spiritual practice. And I kind of turn back to Sara Sidner these last couple of months as almost kind of an aspirational presence of what it is to stay open and with. What it's like to experience heartbreak. What it's like to experience sadness and grief and also a whole bunch of other emotions, anxiety, anger. All parts of being alive at this time. I think of a beautiful line from the Hebrew scriptures now, my experience of the divine is not of a God who is kind of out there up there. And that's the perspective from which this particular line of scripture is offered.

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But even in the differences between how I experience the divine and how it expresses at the root that is there. Is so meaningful and such a deep invitation, it reads from the perspective, from the perspective of God, from the prophet Jeremiah. I will give them a heart of flesh and take away their heart of stone. I will take away their heart of stone. And give them a heart of flesh. I love that image. Of a beating, real, live, vulnerable heart. Not of stone, impermeable, untouchable. But real and alive and awake to. All of this. And this is what the hard practices are about. I want to share with you a hard practice now, and it can be one that we can or you can use any of us can use at a moment, which we might feel that sense of overwhelm or shutting down with anger, with anxiety, with grief, with sadness, with loss, whatever it is that might be coming up for you. And I'm going to ask you to join with me in this if you wish to. Again, nothing compulsory here. If you would rather just kind of observe that what is what feels like the most safe and skillful choice for you. Please do that. And if you want to join in,

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I'm going

**[00:07:01]**

To ask you to do so. It involves placing the hand on the heart. Noticing her breath. Closing our eyes if you wish to. And kind of working with the emotion that is there, especially if it feels kind of overwhelming. And so I'll pick anxiety and emotion I'm kind of familiar with. But you could pick another emotion if it's more present for you or feels like it would be more helpful for you. So the first thing in this practice is just to notice the breath. What is the in breath? I notice the outbreak just for a few cycles. And maybe as your hand is on your heart, you're noticing your own heartbeat. Or maybe you're noticing the warmth of the hand on your heart and it just kind of helps you to be a little bit kind of in touch in this moment. And then with the emotion that might be arising, that might be kind of difficult to work with or might feel a little overwhelming. Can just offer yourself these phrases, each repeated a few times. The first is just kind of an acknowledgement. Could be stated like this and working with anxiety. Right now, I'm noticing anxiety is present. Breathing into and out of that acknowledgement. Right now, I'm noticing. That anxiety is present. Right now, I'm noticing.

**[00:08:50]**

And anxiety is present.

**[00:08:56]**

Right now, I'm noticing.

**[00:08:59]**

That anxiety

**[00:09:01]**

Is present. And from this acknowledgement, moving to a little bit of validation. Sometimes it's OK. That I'm experiencing anxiety. Sometimes it's OK. That I'm experiencing anxiety. Breathing into and out of this. Whatever's coming up.

**[00:09:33]**

Sometimes it is

**[00:09:36]**

Ok. That I'm experiencing anxiety. And then from this acknowledgement and this validation of ourselves and of our experience and present moment. Offering a little aspiration, little intention. When I'm experiencing anxiety. I want to be as helpful and as kind to myself as I can be. When I'm experiencing anxiety. I want to be as helpful and as kind to myself as I can be. When I'm experiencing anxiety. I want to be as

**[00:10:26]**

Helpful,

**[00:10:27]**

As kind to myself as I can be. And just kind of working with these three expressions, the basic noticing of it, the validating that it's OK to be experiencing it. And the desire to be helpful and kind when we're experiencing. And just kind of now returning the focus to the hand and the heart and the breath. And checking in with how you're doing. As we bring this little practice to a close. So this is just kind of a little self compassion break. You know, in those moments in which it might kind of feel like the heart is closing down. And sometimes that's pressure that we put on

ourselves or pressure that we feel from others. And the hard practices work in a different way. Which is rather than pushing the experience away, which especially with challenging emotions like anxiety or anger, shame or grief. Most often what happens if we tend to push them away, we tend to get more of them in there, more challenging expressions. So this little self compassion break, this form of hard practice is instead a kind of different way. Rather than breeding our suffering with anger or resistance. We turn to ourselves with gentleness and kindness and also a kind of courage. I'm noticing what it is like to work with and accept ourselves just as we are in the moment. And then being willing to be with whatever is arising for us. This can be a helpful practice when we feel that maybe the heart is getting a little close to stone, or maybe we're afraid that the heart will burst too much. Instead, just returning the kind of that kind. And tender heart of flesh. Sometimes that self compassion recognition is what we need to just kind of right the ship a little

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Bit

**[00:12:48]**

And remember that we are perhaps more resilient with our challenging emotions that we might think we are. And the truth is, these hard practices can be so powerful with the all of the all of this. Of even with the suffering, with the oppressions, with the unfairness of this life, with the cruelty, with the injustices. This is where the heart practices can be so transformative. In terms of being able to sustain ourselves for the hard, difficult and yet so really important work.

**[00:13:30]**

Of.

**[00:13:32]**

Wanting to help transform suffering. And to goodness and decency and justice, there's a meme that's been shared a lot this past year and I think it's so on point with what hard practice is all about in the midst of the all of the all of this that we are facing collectively. It's from Laura Jean Truman. And she writes this as kind of a prayer. She says, keep my anger from becoming meanness. Keep my sorrow from collapsing into self-pity,

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Keep

**[00:14:11]**

My heart soft enough to keep breaking. Keep my anger turned towards justice, not cruelty.

**[00:14:22]**

Reminds me that all of this, every bit of it. Is for love. Keep me fiercely, kind of. Keep me. Fiercly kind.

**[00:14:46]**

Either way to put it is help me, help us have a. A heart of flesh. In the midst of all of this. As overwhelming as it can be. This is the value of a daily hard practice. Is that we don't have to burn out because of the overwhelming nature of it and we don't have to have hearts that turned to stone because of the overwhelming nature of all of this.

**[00:15:17]**

But instead.

**[00:15:19]**

Stay alive and stay in touch with our own hearts and the hearts of others. Even when our hearts are breaking sometimes. One of the most well-known. Kind of core spiritual heart practices is what's called metta or lovingkindness. It is a kind of bedrock foundational practice for me, and that's what I practice with quite a number of you over the years. And I'd like to invite you into a into a loving kindness practice. It will be a little briefer than normally what I often do when I to ask you if you wish to, to join me now in a loving kindness practice. In a meta practice. If you wish to, you can allow your eyes closed and again, if it's the right and helpful, safe choice for you not to participate in the practice right now and to simply observe, well, then do that. The foundation of matter of loving kindness is being able to receive ourselves our own hearts, just as we are. So you make the most skillful, most right decision about what that looks like for you right now. So as I begin to practice loving kindness, one of the first things we can do is, again, just notice the breath. Just notice what it's like to breathe in. And that's kind of setting that foundational intention that the breath is always here with us, we can always return to it in this practice and beyond this practice. And so in vowing to work the ground of our own hard soil, the first step in Meeta is to call to your minds. I call you into your hearts, if you would, someone who you have a strongly positive sense of

**[00:17:18]**

Connection with

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Really meaningful, loving connection with, that could be from the past. That could be from the present. And if someone like that is showing up here for you, imagine them seated in front of you. Getting a sense of their presence. And noticing what that brings up for you, maybe a sense of warmth, maybe a small smile, maybe the

desire to say thank you or maybe something else is showing up again, greeting ourselves just as we are and staying with our experience. This is the heart of lovingkindness practice. And so just noticing what's coming up for you

**[00:18:01]**

As you

**[00:18:02]**

Hold this person in your mind and hearts, I. And then being willing to kind of allow them to fade from your mind's eye for a moment, maybe with a note of thanks to them. And then starting to turn the focus of your attention towards yourself. And becoming willing to offer some phrases and classical phrases of loving kindness to yourself, you can change these phrases if something else works better for you. But the phrases that can sound like this. May I live in safety?

**[00:18:40]**

May I

**[00:18:41]**

Be happy? May I be as healthy as I can be? May I live with ease and with Wellby? Breathing into and out of what ever is arising for you, whether it's a profound sense of openness towards often loving kindness to yourself, or maybe you're noticing it's challenging. And still becoming willing, as you wish. To offer these phrases to yourself. May I live in safety,

**[00:19:13]**

May I be happy?

**[00:19:15]**

May I be as healthy as I can be? May I live with ease and with well-being and again, just receiving whatever your experience is and opening to it as best you are able.

**[00:19:29]**

And.

**[00:19:32]**

And now kind of opening the aperture of our hearts a little bit wider and becoming willing to direct these phrases of loving kindness outward beyond ourselves. And so calling to the mind hearts I right now. Maybe that same person or same being as you did before, or maybe someone knew. Someone who you have a strongly loving, supportive relationship or a sense of connection with. And then choosing to offer the phrases of love and kindness to them. May you live in safety.

**[00:20:11]**

May you be happy, may you be

**[00:20:14]**

As healthy as you

**[00:20:15]**

Can be

**[00:20:17]**

May you live with ease and with wellbeing. Again, noticing what's coming up with each and breath and with each out breath. And then choosing once more to offer these phrases of loving kindness. You who are beloved to me.

**[00:20:37]**

Now you live in safety. May you be happy. May you

**[00:20:44]**

Be as healthy as you

**[00:20:45]**

Can be May you live

**[00:20:48]**

With ease and with wellbeing. Again, receiving whatever's coming up for you. Opening the heart to your own

**[00:20:59]**

Experience as

**[00:21:00]**

Wide as you are able. So that we might be able to choose to take another step, another expression of offering love

and kindness beyond ourselves. Calling into your mind hearts, I right now someone who maybe you're aware of their presence in your life, but you don't really know that much about them, you're not in the typical meaning of the word close to this person could be someone who dropped off a delivery. It could be someone who you see on screens in your life, someone who you were aware of their presence, who you don't really know them very much. If someone like this. Comes here into your heart minds, I imagine, them sitting in front of you getting a sense of their presence. And offering the phrases of love and kindness to them. May you live in safety.

**[00:21:54]**

May you be happy

**[00:21:57]**

You be as healthy as you can be. May you live with ease and with wellbeing. Noticing how that is to offer loving kindness to someone we don't really know very much about. And choosing once more, if you wish to offer these phrases again. Even though I do not know you well. Now you live in safety.

**[00:22:27]**

May you be happy

**[00:22:30]**

May you be as healthy as you can be Now you live with ease and with well. And again, just noticing how that is how to offer how it feels to offer phrases of love and kindness even without really knowing of the person quote unquote deserves it or not. And so in this way, kind of trusting this energy. If it is safe for you. If it is safe for you calling here into your hearts and minds, someone with whom you may have had a disagreement or disappointment or hurt or even anger. And if you choose to. Offering the phrase of loving kindness to them. May you live in safety.

**[00:23:26]**

May you be happy

**[00:23:29]**

May you be as healthy as you can be

**[00:23:33]**

May you

**[00:23:33]**

Live with ease and with well-being

**[00:23:37]**

And

**[00:23:37]**

Again noticing where you might be opening to this invitation to loving kindness and noticing where you might be closing down to it. And receiving both or anything else, just as it is and just as you are. And again, if it is safe for you, choosing once more to offer these phrases of lovingkindness. Even though there is difficulty between us. Now you live in safety.

**[00:24:06]**

May you be happy?

**[00:24:09]**

May you be as healthy as you can be?

**[00:24:13]**

You live with

**[00:24:14]**

Ease and with well being. And getting in touch with the breath and with the body right now and kind of noticing how that energy of the heart. Is showing up for you in this moment. And if you notice that there's willingness, maybe envisioning that this energy of the heart of matter, of loving kindness kind of extends outward in front of you as far as you might be able to perceive and to the sides of you, to the right and to the left and to the back of you and down into the ground below you and up into the sky above you. Just noticing how it is,

**[00:25:00]**

If

**[00:25:01]**

You would wish to to offer this energy of loving kindness all around you. So that we might be able to say.

**[00:25:12]**

May all beings live in safety.

**[00:25:17]**

All beings be

**[00:25:18]**

Happy.

**[00:25:20]**

May all beings be as healthy as

**[00:25:23]**

They can be.

**[00:25:25]**

May all beings live with ease and with be. The happy beings and the sad beings. The beings that we know well and the beings that we don't know well. The beings that are thriving and the beings that are struggling, the beings who we know, it's very easy for us to love and the beings who, when we are honest, we know that it is very, very difficult for us to love. The beings who this moment are coming to be born. And the beings who this moment are coming to the end of their lives. Again, just noticing that basic energy of the heart. And checking in once again as we conclude. With the energy of your own heart. Noticing how you are doing in this moment. And breathing into and out of whatever is arising. Allowing yourself.

**[00:26:33]**

To be with yourself.

**[00:26:35]**

Just as you

**[00:26:36]**

Are.

**[00:26:38]**

And just as it is. For this is the foundation

**[00:26:44]**

Of lovingkindness practice. To be with.

**[00:26:50]**

And when you're ready, you can open your eyes. Ultimately, these hard practices. Or an expression of our universalism. Universalism, which I understand is basically this. That there is a love so special we don't have to be special to be loved.

**[00:27:12]**

None of us.

**[00:27:14]**

We just have to be willing to stay with our

**[00:27:17]**

Hearts,

**[00:27:19]**

Be curious about our lives. Be curious and caring with ourselves and with others. In some ways, it is the least special thing in the world. And that's what

**[00:27:31]**

Makes. This heart.

**[00:27:35]**

Your heart and mine. So truly wonderful. And the seats and the source. Of so much in this life. That allows us to

**[00:27:47]**

Heal and to behold. Amen

**[00:27:54]**

And may you live in blessing. And for a prayer today that I would invite us into already had a couple of different spiritual practices, what I'm going to ask you is very simply just to place your hand on your heart or both hands on your heart or your hands in prayer pose in front of your hearts. And simply for the prayer today, not just your own heart beating. And notice that what is happening with you right now is happening with everyone else who is alive. This heartbeat, this breath. This pulse and rhythm of life. May we connect into it

**[00:28:42]**

Sustainably. Tenderly.

**[00:28:47]**

And in a loving way.

END OF TRANSCRIPT



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