

TONG-LEN USING ONE'S OWN PROBLEM

You can use this method whenever you are experiencing any kind of problem – whether it is physical, emotional, in a relationship, or at work. Sit down, calm the mind, and generate a positive motivation for doing the practice. Then focus on your problem, allow it to arise in your mind, feel how painful it is, how your mind wants to push it away.... Then think: "I am not the only person experiencing a problem like this. There are many others...." Think of other people who may be experiencing the same or a similar problem, some to an even greater degree than yourself. (For example, if you have lost a loved one, think of people who have lost many loved ones, in a war or a famine.)

Then generate compassion, thinking: "How wonderful it would be if all those people could be free from their suffering." Then decide that you will accept or take on your own experience of this problem, in order that all those other people could be free from theirs. You can do this with the breath: visualize breathing the suffering in the form of dark smoke. It comes into your heart, where the self-centered mind is located, in the form of a solid, dark spot or rock. The dark smoke of suffering absorbs into the rock of self-centeredness and destroys it.... Then breath out happiness and positive qualities and merit, in the form of bright light, giving to yourself and all those other people whatever qualities are needed to be able to deal with the problem and to progress along the path to enlightenment.