

Reconciliation Practice

The group leader welcomes the participants and asks, if all have brought the practice text with them. Then he or she reminds people of the purpose of this practice and says a few words about the right attitude.

Purpose of this practice

To appreciate, encourage and nourish each other and ourselves, and to learn more about communication.

To share our insights, report our progress & understand our own and others' strengths and weaknesses better.

To share the difficulties we experience in practice, in working for the Dharma, and in coping with our own patterns.

To let go of and apologise for anything we have DONE which has disturbed the harmony of the group or any individual.

To let go of and apologise for anything we have SAID and anything we have THOUGHT which has disturbed the harmony of the group or any individual.

The Three Noble Principles

Just as with any other practice, the power and authenticity of confession are directly dependent upon the extent to which we are able to apply 'good in the beginning, good in the middle, & good at the end'.

In the beginning, we check what our motivation is for taking this time to practice.

In the middle, by arousing some awareness of *shunyata* and our own limitless *bodhicitta* nature, we are more able to release any tendency to want to have a particular experience in the practice.

At the end, whatever experiences we have had - liberating, stressful, joyful, frustrating, - we render fruitful by offering them to the Buddhas and all beings, deeply aspiring that through them we may grow more and more, become more and more open, and have more and more to offer our world.

Ground-rules

- No 'cross-talk'
- All statements to begin with 'I'
- No-one is obliged to speak unless they wish to
- Commitment to confidentiality: nothing that emerges in a confession may be shared with anyone outside the group

Guided Practice

Begin as usual with the preliminary—the Three Crucial Points.

The Crucial Point of the Body: sit in the meditation posture.

The Crucial Point of the Speech: speech silent, natural to the flow of the breath.

The Crucial Point of the Mind: the crucial point of the mind has two aspects:

First is to check your **motivation** and arouse bodhichitta, the deep desire to free all beings from suffering and the heartfelt wish to lead them to the state of omniscient buddhahood.

“Since everything is interdependent, whatever we do, say, or think has an effect. So, our motivation, or our intention—as well as our aspiration prayers—can be extremely powerful.”

Motivation prayer

Second is **Guru Yoga**: invoke in the sky before you the embodiment of enlightenment, in the form of your master, or Guru Rinpoche.

Invoking the Lama

Pray that all the wisdom and qualities in your master’s wisdom mind related to the *arousing of bodhichitta* arise within your being. As you pray with sincere and deep devotion, the master glows with tremendous love and compassion, melts into light and dissolves into you. His mind merges completely with yours.

- Now visualize the deities of the field of merit in front of you—or more simply Guru Rinpoche.

Refuge prayer (three times)

Call upon them to bear witness to your arousing of bodhichitta.

To arouse the *four immeasurables*, you could begin by choosing someone very dear to you as the object of your meditation. Reflect on your closeness to this person. Then make use of **the four links**.

1. Think how wonderful it would be if this person found happiness and freedom from suffering. *This is your aspiration.*
2. Then make a fervent wish that he or she be happy and does not suffer, just as much as you wish to have happiness and be free from suffering yourself. *This is your intention.*
3. Then make a deep *commitment* that you yourself will take responsibility for their welfare.
4. Finally, with a heartfelt *prayer*, invoke the blessing and the help of the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.

- Then, universalize the practice, and make it immeasurable, embracing all beings everywhere.

—See all beings - those you like to be with and also those with whom you have difficulties or you like to avoid being with – regard them all as the same (**equanimity**), all worthy of your love and help.

—Think about how close they have been to you, dwell upon their kindness, feel gratitude and long to repay that kindness. Feel **love** for those who do not have happiness, and wish they have happiness and its causes.

—Feel unbearable **compassion** for any who are suffering, and pray that they be free from suffering and its causes.

—Feel **joy** for those who have found happiness and its causes, and pray that it never leaves them.

- (*Optional part*) Then arouse **bodhichitta in aspiration and action**:

—“*In order to bring all sentient beings to the lasting happiness of complete enlightenment, I will do whatever I can to attain perfect buddhahood.*”

[pledging towards the goal]

— “*So that I can do so, I will train in the vast activity of the bodhisattvas, and persevere with joyful enthusiasm until not a single being is left behind in samsara.*”
[pledging towards the *cause*]

Bodhichitta prayer (three times)

At this point it is recommended to spend a few moments with practising loving kindness for oneself or self tonglen

The practice of appreciation

The group sits in silence until someone feels moved to ‘appreciate’ another. They stand, move to the centre of the group, between the two rows of cushions, and invite the person they wish to appreciate to join them there. They sit facing each other, bow to each other and the first person simply tells the second what it is that they appreciate about them. We can also appreciate several people simultaneously, one by one or the whole group; in which case everyone just stays seated where they are, obviously.

The other person simply sits quietly and receives appreciation without commentary, jokes, explanations, protests, or funny faces... The **group** simply sits, without eye contact, body language or other comment, and focuses on creating an immaculately clean vessel within which this exchange can take place with utter simplicity and authenticity; **loving kindness** practice would be an excellent practice to do at this time. When the appreciation is finished, both bow again to each other and return to their seats. The one who has just received appreciation may not immediately go on to appreciate someone else. Everybody can rejoice!

Reconciliation Practice

The View

It is about responsibility, not guilt. Real confession is about *releasing*, purifying, ‘making a clean breast of things’. Guilt is passive, self-indulgent and disempowering; responsibility is active, rigorous, liberating and transformative.

Being a ‘Nangpa’

Central to the practice of confession is a willingness to look *inside* at the sources of our difficulties. We have to be willing to take responsibility for our *own* arisings.

Reconconciliation practice is purification practice

The Four Powers

1. *The Power of Regret*

2. *The Power of the Object*

If we can invoke the presence of an embodiment of truth in our practice it will be much more powerfully purifying. Externally, this source of purification is the Buddhas, Guru Rinpoche and especially our teacher, the presence of all of whom we strongly invoke at the beginning of the practice. Internally, the source of purification is our own fundamental pure Buddha-nature, which the Buddhas & our teacher embody and reflect.

3. *The Power of the Practice*

If we really enter into it confidently, we can discover for ourselves how purifying, nourishing and liberating this practice can be.

4. *The Power of Resolution*

At the end of the practice, we strongly resolve not to get caught up again in the same pattern.

Practice of Confession

The group sits in silence once again until someone feels moved to get up and go to the 'confession cushion'. They do three prostrations to the shrine and sangha, and sit down. In their own time, they talk about whatever it is they wish to share - perhaps several things. They are essentially simply 'talking to Guru Rinpoche and Sogyal Rinpoche' (practicing whilst looking at the shrine helps keep an awareness of this), with the rest of their sangha creating a silently supportive and immaculately non-judgemental vessel. No-one may interrupt or comment. The person takes as much time as they need, without any sense of having to rush. The rest of the **group** practice **tonglen** silently, taking on suffering and giving love, support and non-judgmental appreciation. At the end, the **person** says the **confession prayer** once, then the whole **group** chants the **100-syllable mantra** of Vajrasattva once together. Everyone bows once and the person returns to their seat.

Those who do not want to talk, also go to the 'confession cushion', do three prostrations to the shrine, and sit down. Then they say, that they do not want to speak

today and do the confession prayer once. The whole group chants the 100-syllable mantra and everyone bows. The process then continues until everyone who wishes has spoken. Then the **group** says the „**Heart of Vajrasattva**“ together aloud once.

It is usually best to then have a short tea/pee-break, in silence, during which time the cushions and chairs can be arranged in a circle.

Resolution

The group now sits in a circle. Again, anyone who wishes may speak - to check if something was not clear or clarify further what they or someone else said; to make helpful comments; to express how a situation looks from their point-of-view. All statements must begin with ‘I’, and no-one may interrupt or talk across anyone else.

This section of the practice requires active facilitation, and a shared commitment to resolve situations honestly *and* harmoniously. It also requires great delicacy, as many people may see *any* comment by someone else as invasive if it is about a sensitive issue they have just aired. Loving silence may be the greatest support. **Each person should reflect carefully on their motivation before they speak.**

This section of the practice often provides an empowering space to clarify issues, or at least deepen mutual understanding even if we’re not able to immediately resolve a situation. It is important not to feel that we *have* to get everything ‘resolved’ - neatly tied up and packaged - by the end of the meeting. Not all situations *can* be resolved immediately. More important is to realise that *all* situations are *workable* if we are willing to surrender territoriality and embrace openness.

Here again the continuity of the group meeting is very important. Knowing that we will soon meet again relieves any pressure to rush to an inauthentic ‘resolution’; we can leave things to settle, digest new insights or understanding that may have come during the meeting, work on ourselves between meetings.

Conclusion of the guided Bodhichitta Practice

Visualize again Guru Rinpoche or the deities of the field of merit in the sky before you.

- Pray to the sources of refuge that bodhichitta may be born in your being. Visualize that, through the power of your devotion, the deities of the field of merit all melt into light and dissolve into you.
- Consider that all the two-fold bodhichitta present within the wisdom minds of the deities arises within your own mind. Then rest in a state of indivisible emptiness and compassion—absolute bodhichitta.

Dedication

This whole practice is one of the most powerful ways of making an offering towards Rinpoche's long life and his activity, because the aim of this practice is, to help removing all blockages in our interactions with others, which hinder us to be in tune with and serve his vision.

Rinpoche's Longlife Prayer

When the meeting has naturally come to a point of closure, the facilitator should remind participants of their commitment to confidentiality, announce the time and venue of the next confession practice, and ask who is going to guide the next reconciliation practice.

Confession Prayer

(from 'Knowing One Liberates All', by Jamgön Kongtrul Lödro Thaye)

ho

**tham ché dorje ché dang chamdral te
dewar sheg pé lob mar dam no mé
kun kyang thun par kyö pé damtsig la
nyam nyi dang lé ne nye yerme kyang
lu ngag nam par dag pé tsul tsam du
zhung lé nyam shing thug dang gal wa nam
nam dag sam pé ni né tsig di shag
dzin mé ngang du zö par shé dzö la
rangshin dag pé tsang pa tsal du sol
ah ah ah**

All of us are vajra-brothers and sisters,

And have taken the samaya oath as disciples of the Sugatas.

We all moreover have made a commitment to behave
harmoniously.

There is no distinction of excellence or fault within the context of
equanimity;

Yet in regard to fundamental manners of pure body and pure
speech

I have fallen from the traditional ideals and upset your minds.

To the extent that I have not remained within a completely pure
state of mind,

I confess with these words.

Please accept this with forbearance, not holding onto anything,

And grant absolution by pure self-nature, I pray!