

Reconciliation: Healing the Inner Child

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Chapter 6

Healing the Inner Child

Meditation on the Five-Year-Old Child

This meditation can be done while either sitting or walking. It's important to find a quiet place, a place where you can be comfortable and relaxed and uninterrupted for at least five minutes. As you breathe in and out, you can say these words to yourself. Breathing in, I see myself as a five-year-old child. Breathing out, I smile with compassion to the five-year-old child in me. First you may want to say the whole sentence, then you may just want to use the key words: Myself five years old. Smiling with compassion. The five-year-old child within needs a lot of compassion and attention. It would be nice if every day we would find a few minutes to sit down and practice this meditation. It would be very healing and very comforting, because the five-year-old child in us is still alive and needs to be taken care of. With acknowledgment and communication, we can see that child responding to us and she or he begins feeling better. If she feels better, we feel better also and we start to feel great freedom. That child within us is not just us. Our parents also suffered as children. Even as adults, they often didn't know how to handle their suffering, so they make their children suffer. They were a victim of their own suffering, and then their children became victims of that suffering too. If we're not able to transform the suffering in us, we'll pass it on to our children. Every parent has been a five-year-old child, fragile invulnerable father and I aren't really two separate entities. I am his continuation, so he is inside me. Helping the five-year-old boy that is my father in me heals both of us at the same time. Helping the five-year-old girl who was my mother and who is still in me, I help her to transform and be free. I'm a continuation of my mother. That little girl who was wounded and suffered so much is alive in me. If I can transform and heal my mother or father inside of me, I will be able to help them outside of me also. This meditation will generate compassion and understanding directed to ourselves and also to our parents as five-year-old children. We talk a lot about understanding, but is there any understanding higher than this? When we can smile, we know we're smiling for our mother and father, and liberating our mother and father. If we practice in this way, then all the questions which make people suffer: Who am I? Did my mother really want me? Did my father really want me? What meaning does my life have? Become meaningless. We don't need to go back to our native land, to Ireland, to China, to find our roots. We just need to be in touch with every cell in our body. Our father, mother, and all of our ancestors are present in a very real way in each cell of our body, even in the bacteria. Awakened understanding has been transmitted to us from all generations, all the sentient beings, and also these-called non-sentient beings. We are both father and child. Sometimes we manifest as father or mother and sometimes we manifest as child. As soon as the guava fruit is born, it has guava seeds in it, so it is already another or a father. We can practice like this: Breathing in, I see my father as a five-year-old child. Breathing out, I smile to my father as a five-year-old child. Father, five years old.

Smiling with compassion. Your father was a five-year-old child before he became a father. As a five-year-old boy, he was quite vulnerable. He could get hurt very easily by your grandpa or your grandma, and by other people. So, if sometimes he was rough or difficult, perhaps it was

because of how the five-year-old boy in him was treated. Perhaps he was wounded as a young child. If you understand that, perhaps you won't get angry at him anymore. You may have compassion for him. If you have a picture of your five-year-old father, you can look at this during the meditation. Look at him when he was five years old, and breathe in and out and you will see the five-year-old child who is still alive in him, and in you also. When your mother was five years old, she was also vulnerable and fragile. She may have gotten wounded very easily, and she may not have had a teacher or friend who helped her to heal. So the wound and the pain continue in her. That's why sometimes she may have behaved unkindly to you. If you can see your mother as a fragile five-year-old girl, then you can forgive her very easily with compassion. The five-year-old girl who was your mother is always alive in her and in you. Breathing in, I see my mother as a five-year-old girl. Breathing out, I smile to that wounded five-year-old girl who was my mother. Mother, five years old. Smiling with compassion. If you're a young person, it's important to practice to heal the five-year-old child in you. Otherwise, if you have children, you'll transmit your wounded child to our children. If you've already transmitted your wounded child to your son or daughter, it's not too late. You have to practice now to heal the little child in you and to help your son or daughter to heal the wounded child that you have transmitted to him or to her. All of us, as parents and children, can practice together and heal the wounded child in us and in our children. This is an urgent practice. If we can succeed in doing this, communication between us and our family will be restored. Mutual understanding will be possible. We are in our children. We have transmitted ourselves entirely to them. Our sons, our daughters are our continuation. Our son, our daughter is us. And they will carry us far into the future. If we have the time to love our children with compassion and understanding, they will profit from that and make the future better for themselves, their children, and future generations.

Listening to Your Inner Child

To take good care of ourselves, we must go back and take care of the wounded child inside of us. You have to practice going back to your wounded child every day. You have to embrace him or her tenderly, like a big brother or a big sister. We must listen to the wounded child inside of us. The wounded child in us is here in the present moment. And we can heal him or her right now. "My dear little wounded child, I'm here for you, ready to listen to you. Please tell me all your suffering, all your pain. I am here, really listening." We have to embrace that child and, if necessary, we have to cry together with that child, perhaps while we are doing sitting meditation. We went into the forest and do that. And if you know how to go back to her, to him, and listen like that every day for five or ten minutes, healing will take place. Among us there are people who have practiced this and after a period of practice there has been diminution of their suffering and a transformation. After practicing like that, we see the relationship between ourselves and others has become much better, much easier. We see more peace, more love in us.

Talking to Your Inner Child

Your inner child and you aren't exactly two, but you aren't exactly one either. You influence each other. As adults we can practice mindfulness and invite the inner child to join us in the practice. The inner child is as real as the grown up adult. It's like the seed of corn is still real in

the plant of corn. It's there; it's not only a matter of the past. So if the plant of corn knows that she is one with the grain of corn, conversation is possible. If we have the tendency to go back to the past and live the painful memories of the past, we have to be aware that we and our inner child are going back to the past to live that experience again, that fear, and that desire. It has become a habit, and we don't want to do that. It doesn't help. Instead, we talk to the inner child. We invite her to come up, to come out and to make acquaintance with life in the present moment. To stay in the present moment is a practice, it's a training. As long as we're established in the present moment, we don't suffer the trauma of the past. In the present moment we can realize that there are so many wonders, so many positive conditions. So taking the hand of the inner child and playing, getting more deeply in touch with these wonders of life is truly the practice. Sometimes we need support, someone we trust to help us do that easily, because there's a natural tendency to slide back to the past. All kinds of desires are the continuation of our original desire to be safe. The little child in us continues to worry and be fearful. In the present moment there's no problem, no threat. If we don't have a problem in the present moment, it means we don't have a problem. Why continue to worry and be fearful? We have to transmit that wisdom to the inner child. We need to let the child within us know that he or she no longer has to be afraid. We can go to the hill to be alone, walk among the plum trees or the grapevines, and talk to the child inside. We can say, "My dear young brother, my dear young sister, I know you suffer. You are my inner child. I am you. We have grown up. So don't be afraid anymore. We are safe. We have the means to protect ourselves. Come with me and be in the present moment. Don't let the past imprison us. Take my hand, and let's walk together. Let's enjoy every step. "We should really talk to the child inside, aloud—not just thinking it, but doing it. You might like to talk to your inner child every day. Healing will take place. And your child will join you in your life. We can talk to the child, take her hand, and bring her into the present to enjoy life in the here and the now. If we have fifteen minutes to talk in this way to the vulnerable child inside us, we can expose that old fear. Think of boiling a pot of water with the lid on. The steam will push up against the lid. If we remove the lid so that the steam can come out of the pot, there's no more problem. The steam isn't creating a lot of pressure anymore; it has been released. Similarly, if we can talk to our inner child this way and expose the original fear from childhood to the light of awareness, we can begin to heal. We have to reassure the child that although that fear is real, it no longer has any basis. We have become an adult. We can protect and defend ourselves.

A Conversation with Your Inner Child

We have to talk to the child and just as important, we have to let the child speak, let the child express himself. If we didn't get a chance to speak up as a child, here is that young child's chance. Try putting two cushions facing each other. Sit on one cushion and look at the other. Visualize yourself sitting there as a five-year-old or four-year-old or three-year-old, and talk to her: "My dear inner child, I know you are there. You are wounded, I know. You've gone through a lot of suffering. I know it's true, because I was you. But now I'm talking to you as your adult self, and I want to tell you that life is wonderful, with so many refreshing and healing elements. Let us not be drawn into the past, to live and experience again and again the suffering of the past. If you have something to tell me, please just tell me." Then you sit on the other cushion. You sit, or if you like you can lie down as a three-year-old boy or girl, and talk with the language of a child. You can complain. You complain that you're fragile and vulnerable, helpless, you

can't do anything, you're afraid. You want so much the presence of a grown-up person. You try to express that, and you play the role of the inner child. If some emotion, some fear comes up—that's good. You feel real fear. You feel the real desire to have someone close to you, protecting you and so on. Then you switch back on to the other cushion and say, "Well, I have listened to you, my inner child. And I understand completely the suffering. But, you know, we have grown up and become an adult. We're now capable of defending ourselves. We can even call the police. We can prevent the other person from doing the things that we don't want. And we can do everything by ourselves. We don't need an adult; we don't need anyone. We can be complete within ourselves. We don't really need another person in order for us to be ourselves. The tendency is to believe that there should be another person to play the role of mommy or daddy; but that's only a feeling, that's not based on reality. I have experienced that we can be sufficient in ourselves, we can get fulfillment ourselves, we don't need another person to be there in order for us to relax and be at ease." If you prefer, you don't need to switch cushions or even speak aloud. If you talk and listen like that with your inner child every day for five or ten minutes, healing will take place

Writing a Letter to Your Inner Child

You can also write a letter of one, two, or three pages to the little child in you to say that you recognize his other presence and you will do everything you can to heal his wounds. After writing a few letters to your inner child, then you can notice if the inner child has something to write back!

Sharing Delights with Your Inner Child

Another way we can make sure that the little child within us feels safe is to invite the child within to come out with us and to play on the ground of the present moment. When you climb a beautiful mountain, invite your child within to climb with you. When you contemplate the beautiful sunset, invite him or her to enjoy it with you. If you do that for a few weeks or a few months, the wounded child in you will experience healing.

Sitting with Sangha Friends

When we have been deeply wounded as children, it is hard for us to trust and love, and hard for us to allow love to penetrate us. But in this practice, we are advised to go home and take care of our wounded child, even though this is difficult. We need instructions on how to do this so that we are not overwhelmed by the pain inside. We practice cultivating the energy of mindfulness to become strong enough. Also, our friends' energy of mindfulness can help us. Maybe the first time we go home, we need one or two friends—especially those who have been successful in the practice—sitting next to us, to lend us their support, mindfulness, and energy. When a friend sits close to us and holds our hand, we combine his or her energy with our own and go home to embrace our wounded child within. If you have a loving Sangha, then your practice will be easier. To practice alone, without the support of brothers and sisters, would be too difficult especially for someone who's just beginning. Taking refuge in the Sangha and having brothers and sisters to assist you, give advice, and support you in difficult moments is very important.

