

Tonglen Practice

[Based on instruction by Pema Chodron](#)

“Tonglen practice is a method for connecting with suffering—our own and that which is all around us, everywhere we go. It is a method for overcoming our fear of suffering and for dissolving the tightness of our hearts. Primarily it is a method for awakening the compassion that is inherent in all of us, no matter how cruel or cold we might seem to be.”

There are four steps or stages in Tonglen practice which comes out of the Tibetan Buddhist tradition. This practice is very compatible with a Druid’s path. Here is a short summary of them.

1. Pause and open your mind into a state of openness or stillness. Stop and be still. Open to spaciousness and clarity.
2. Breathe. Chodron says “breathe in textures.” Breathe in through all of your pores with focused intention. Breathe out bright, full, clear. Radiate out through all of the pores of your body. Do this until this feels like your rhythm of breathing.
3. Work with a real, personal painful situation. Breathe in your painful situation, breathe out what

is needed for that situation. E.g. Breathe in the worry you feel about our job. Breathe out the reassurance for your job. Breathe in the pain of your headache. Breathe out the relief of the headache. Breathe in the fear you are feeling around the current crisis. Breathe out the love that brings you back into balance. Breathe out relief in any form that you need.

4. Make the taking in and sending out bigger. If you are doing tonglen for yourself or for someone you love, extend it out for all others in the same boat. As you breathe in and out your situation, offer it for all who share your situation. Breathe in your situation and for all those who are like you. Breathe out the relief for you and all who are like you.

Chodron adds:

“Tonglen can extend infinitely. As you do the practice, gradually over time your compassion naturally expands, and so does your realization that things are not as solid as you thought. As you do this practice, gradually at your own pace, you will be surprised to find yourself more and more able to be there for others even in what used to seem like impossible situations.