

Inner Child Meditation

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INNER CHILD THERAPY



Compassion for Your Inner Child

"The cry we hear from deep in our hearts comes from the wounded child within. Healing this inner child's pain will transform negative emotions."

~ Thich Nhat Hanh

This daily meditation practice is inspired by "Reconciliation: Healing The Inner Child" by Thich Nhat Hanh

Every human being alive has experienced some kind of wounding, difficulty or trauma. We all have a hurt inner child that feels separate, unloved and alone. To protect and defend yourself against future suffering, you might try to forget your emotional pain. When your emotions rise up for love and acceptance, you might fear you can't bear them and then stuff them back down.

Thich Nhat Hanh writes:

"But just because we may have found ways to ignore our inner child doesn't mean she or he isn't there. The wounded child is always there, trying to get our attention. The child says, "I'm here. I'm here. You can't avoid me. You can't run away from me." We want to end our suffering by sending

the child to a deep place inside and staying as far away as possible. But running away doesn't end our suffering; it only prolongs it.

The wounded child asks for care and love, but we do the opposite. We run away because we're afraid of suffering. The block of pain and sorrow in us feels overwhelming. Even if we have time, we don't come home to ourselves. We try to keep ourselves constantly entertained—watching television or movies, socializing, or using alcohol or drugs—because we don't want to experience that suffering all over again."

Tender Compassion

The wounded child inside is a reality, but you likely experience it only as uncomfortable and inconvenient emotional pain. Yet, the more you ignore your inner child, the more she will continue to hurt. Your inner child needs you to turn towards her with love, but instead, you likely turn away. When you ignore your emotional pain, you will re-wound the already wounded child within.

Your suffering child is not in the past. If you are in emotional pain, your inner child is very much alive in this present moment. Whenever you are suffering emotionally, your wounded inner child is asking for loving attention. When you amplify compassion for your inner child, you can generate loving attention towards your pain.

When you see your emotional pain as your wounded inner child, you can more easily find compassion. When you start to include your emotional pain in your daily life, this inclusion, attention and unconditional love, this energy can embrace and heal the inner child by saying, "I love you." Every time your emotional pain arises it will tenderize your heart and expand your insight and awareness.

Loving Your Inner Child

Sometimes your wounded child within needs all of your attention. Your inner child might emerge from the depths of your consciousness and ask for your attention at the most inconvenient times. If you are listening, you will hear her voice calling for help. At that moment, instead of paying attention to whatever is in front of you, you can stop and tenderly embrace your wounded child - if only for a few moments. If you need to focus on

the task at hand, you can say to your inner child, for example, "I see you and I hear you, and I will spend some time with you in one hour."

Thich Nhat Hanh suggests:

"You can talk directly to the child with the language of love, saying, "In the past, I left you alone. I went away from you. Now, I am very sorry. I am going to embrace you." You can say, "Darling, I am here for you. I will take good care of you. I know you suffer so much. I have been so busy.

I have neglected you, and now I have learned a way to come back to you." If necessary, you have to cry together with that child. Whenever you need to, you can sit and breathe with the child. "Breathing in, I go back to my wounded child; breathing out, I take good care of my wounded child."

You can lovingly talk to your inner child several times a day. Reassure your inner child that you will never let her down again or leave her unattended. The little child has been left alone for many years. Listen carefully every day for five or ten minutes, and gradual healing will take place.

Loving Companionship with Your Inner Child

It is helpful to think of your inner child as having her own personality and emotional needs. When you go on a beautiful walk, invite your hurting child within to walk with you. When you contemplate the sunset, invite 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.

With practice, you might see that your hurting inner child is not singular to you. It may also represent several generations. Perhaps your parents weren't able to look after the wounded child in themselves. So when you're embracing the wounded child in you, you're embracing all the wounded children of your past generations. This attention practice is not a practice for yourself alone, but also for your ancestors.

Your ancestors may not have known how to care for their wounded child within, so they transmitted their wounded children to you. Your practice of self-attention will end this cycle. If you can heal your wounded child, you will not only liberate yourself, but you will also help liberate whoever has hurt or abused you.

If you generate the energy of understanding and compassion for your wounded child, you will suffer much less. When you generate mindfulness, compassion and understanding become possible, and you can more easily allow people to love you. Before, you may have been suspicious of everything and everyone. Compassion for your inner child helps you relate to others and restores your ability to love and be loved.

Clearing Emotional Knots

You know there are toxins in your body, and if your blood doesn't circulate well, these toxins accumulate. In order to remain healthy, your body works hard to expel the toxins. When the blood circulates well, the kidneys and the liver can do their job to dispel toxins. You can use massage to help the blood circulate better.

Your consciousness, too, might be in a state of bad circulation. You might have a block of suffering, pain, sorrow, or despair in you; like a toxin in your consciousness. You could call this a negative internal formation, an emotional knot. Embracing your pain and sorrow with the energy of mindfulness is the practice of massaging your emotional knots into a state of better circulation.

Your emotional blocks of pain, sorrow, anger, and despair will want to come into your mind because they need your attention. They want to emerge, but you likely do not want to acknowledge these uninvited guests because they're painful to look at. You probably prefer them to stay asleep down in the basement. Not wanting to face them, you will fill the living room of your psyche with other guests.

Whenever you have ten or fifteen minutes of free time, you likely do anything you can to keep the living room of your psyche occupied. You might call a friend. You might pick up a book or turn on the television. You might hope that if the living room is occupied, these unpleasant mental formations will not come up. But all mental formations need to circulate. If you don't let them come up, it will create bad circulation in your psyche, and symptoms of mental illness and depression will begin to manifest in your mind and body.

Dismantling Barriers

As you learn not to fear your knots of emotional pain, you will slowly begin to let them circulate up into your mind's living room. You will begin to learn how to embrace them and transform them with the energy of love. When you dismantle the barrier between the basement and the living room of your mind, blocks of pain will come up, and you will have to suffer a bit. Your inner child may have a lot of fear and anger stored up from being down in the basement for so long.

Mindful, loving attention is a strong source of energy that can recognize, embrace, and take care of these negative energies. Perhaps these negative energies don't want to come up at first, perhaps there's too much fear and distrust, so you may have to coax them a bit. After being embraced for some time, a strong emotion will return to the basement of your psyche, but it will be weaker than before.

You can heal your emotional pain gradually - in layers - so that it is not overwhelming. Every time you give your negative formations a bath of loving attention, the blocks of emotional pain will become lighter. So, as Thich Nhat Hanh would say, "Give your anger, your despair and your fear a bath of loving mindful attention every day."

Loving Attention

1. **Recognize:** You can stop at any time and become aware of the child within you. When you recognize the wounded child for the first time, all you need to do is be aware of her and say "hello." That's all. Perhaps your inner child is sad. If you notice this, you can just breathe in and say to yourself, "Breathing in, hello, sadness. Breathing out, I will take good care of you."
2. **Embrace:** Once you have recognized your inner child, the second function of loving attention is to embrace her. Instead of fighting your emotions, you can turn directly towards her with mature, loving attention. You can concentrate on your emotional pain, and notice its nuances with loving curiosity. The first few minutes of recognizing and

embracing your inner child with such tenderness will bring some relief. The difficult emotions will still be there, but you won't suffer as much.

3. **Soothe:** Loving attention recognizes, embraces, and soothes. After recognizing and embracing your inner child, the third function of loving attention is to soothe your difficult emotions with kind words. Holding your inner child gently, whispering kind words, you'll be soon able to see the roots of your negative mental formations.

Daily Deep Concentration

It might seem strange to spend time deeply concentrating on your emotional pain each day, but it is a very fruitful practice. Concentration invites insight, and insight has the power to liberate you from a painful past. With great mindfulness, love and insight, you can heal all of your inner child's pain.

Summation

How to Include Your Inner Child in Your Daily Life

1. **Dedicated Time:** Set aside 10-30 minutes to sit quietly with your inner child.
2. **Invite Insight and Relaxation:** You might want to have your journal nearby to record your inner child's voice. You also might want to play soft, meditative music.
3. **Pay Attention to Your Body:** You might notice pain or discomfort in some part of your body. Place your hand lovingly on your discomfort. Pour love into the pain.
4. **Invite Your Inner Child to Arise:** Invite your inner child up from the basement of your psyche, into your conscious mind for a friendly connection, and perhaps a conversation.

Here is a spoken meditation to support you to reconnect with your inner child (inspired by spiritual teacher Matt Kahn.)

Dearest Inner Child:

*If you have ever felt that I have lived in a way,
that has excluded you from my experience.*

I am so sorry.

Please forgive me.

Let this moment be a restart where we make peace.

Allowing the mind and heart to come together.

So that the war within myself can end.

I love you.

I am sorry.

Please forgive me.

I did not know how deeply you hurt.

And, I vow from this moment forward,

That I will love and adore you,

As only I can love and adore you.

And so it is.