

Make Me One with Everything

BUDDHIST MEDITATIONS
TO AWAKEN FROM THE ILLUSION
OF SEPARATION

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Breathing in: relaxing, letting go, centering.

Breathing out: calm and clear,
feeling is healing, opening.

Introduction

Awakening Together through Inter-Meditation

If you've ever felt truly "one" with something—your beloved in the throes of intimacy, nature as you inhaled the perfume and silence of a pine forest after a snowstorm, your child as you watched her sleep, or victims of an earthquake in a country you've never visited—you've experienced inter-meditation. If you've ever looked into the eyes of your dying father and known the exact moment his spirit departed, wept because a friend was grieving, or felt overwhelmed with love for a pet—you've experienced inter-meditation. Inter-meditating means meditating with "other"; it's an intentional connection in order to realize non-duality. This subtle transpersonal intimacy and integrity are the Two I's of our best life, far beyond the small i of egotism and selfishness. How we can sustain both this connection and intent is the subject of this book. Once you do it, it's like learning how to swim—you won't know how to *not* do it.

Through inter-meditation, we ultimately go beyond the experience of separation; we realize that there is no essential difference between inward and outward, us and them, yin and yang. It takes two complementary parts to make a whole—like bowing down and rising up, or breathing in and out.

We're used to thinking of meditation as turning inward and intentionally applying ourselves to *achieving* something with our minds: mindfulness and introspection, the dissolution of obstacles through self-inquiry, or moments of peace through concentration, contemplation, and self-emptying. But inter-meditation is the other half of meditation—it's inclusive, *not* just letting go, but letting come *and* go. As it is. Letting be. Not trying to get rid of stuff, but recognizing that stuff and being at ease and even intimate with it.

Inter-meditation provides many methods for closing the gaps between self and others, allowing us to see through the illusory veils of separation. It transports us beyond the individual—the “small self”—into the universal—the “Big Self”—obliterating the borders between the two. This boundary-less, shared spirituality takes us into the infinite space and buoyancy of the transpersonal—what my old friend, the Venerable Thich Nhat Hanh, has termed *interbeing*.

To understand both the Big Self and the small self simultaneously is to see beyond the limits of our egos and recognize that there is no separation between us and the rest of the cosmos—the entire population of the earth, the microbes in our digestive systems, the stars in galaxies we can't even imagine. In the Indian epic the Ramayana, Hanuman, the monkey god embodying selfless devotion to a higher purpose, says, “When I forget who I am, I serve God. When I remember who I am, I

am God.” This is how our small selves are part of our Big Selves. And it’s the essence of the spiritual path, the ongoing dialogue between our human and Divine nature.

When we learn to mindfully practice inter-meditation, employing techniques and exercises like the ones in this book, we deepen our relationships and connections to one another in a microcosmic and macrocosmic, subatomic and universal way. Although inter-meditation can happen spontaneously and does indeed occur naturally throughout our lives, it is extraordinarily beneficial to be aware of it. Conscious inter-meditation has helped me more than almost any other spiritual exercise. The day-to-day effects of breaking through the imagined walls between our small self and Big Self—outer and inner, I and Thou, here and there, the wanted and unwanted—vanquish fear and anxiety as they arise and allow us to embrace life genuinely, unhesitatingly, with fervor and delight. Inter-meditation helps heal not only psychological and spiritual afflictions, but also physical ailments. Anyone can practice it in any situation: from a school to a corporation, from a military base to a cemetery.

You can learn to inter-meditate in myriad ways, not just on a cushion, or a pew, or a green mat at a yoga studio. You don’t need to close your eyes, cross your legs, and hope to reach Nirvana or Heaven someday. When practiced with meditative intent, activities like hikes become pilgrimages, thoughts of gratitude and hope become prayers, shared silence becomes sacred dialogue, and family dinner becomes communion. Inter-meditation is authentic lovemaking—spirits connecting on multiple levels at once, both conscious and unconscious.

We Buddhists call the result of overcoming the duality of self and other *Bodhichitta*, the awakened heart/mind that has

empathic compassion for all beings—our best Selves. This is the state from which St. Paul urges Christians to “pray without ceasing.” Psychologist Mihály Csíkszentmihályi calls it “flow.” South African civil rights activist and retired bishop Desmond Tutu describes it as *ubuntu*—the idea that a single person thrives only when the community thrives. My teacher, the late master Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche, called it “the luminous heart of the Dharma, a wheel of virtuous good karma which turns day and night.”

These descriptions might seem esoteric, but they’re not when you experience them for yourself. I have a friend named Amelia whose favorite inter-meditation practice is on the New York City subway. When she feels tired, anxious, or angry, wishing she could be as far from her fellow passengers as possible, Amelia stops, takes a breath, and *really* looks at one person. She pictures him or her as a baby—pure, innocent, nothing other than hope and joy—and she holds that image until she feels truly connected, breathing and inter-meditating with that pure, innocent soul. Then Amelia moves on to the next passenger. A commute that could have been just another stressor is elevated to something meaningful, even holy. Who knew that a sacred subway runs right beneath the sidewalks?

You don’t ride the subway? Another adaptive inter-meditator I know practices when he’s stuck in Chicago traffic by making compassionate eye contact with fellow drivers. He calls up empathy for what they are feeling behind the wheel, pondering where they may be rushing to and why, and wishing them well in whatever they may be doing, rather than dwelling on his own frustration.

Irritated with someone? In this book I’ll show you a way to overcome conflict by entraining small self with Big Self,

sweeping it into its flow like a glass of water poured into a river. Inter-meditation dissolves comparison and judgment through an inner listening that encourages you to be fully, attentively present and accountable.

Suffering from an illness? I introduce healing inter-meditations that help you work with your disease instead of against it. Our illusion of separation feeds anxiety, and as countless scientists and doctors have discovered, freeing ourselves from it can facilitate wellness. Stress (or dis-ease) contributes to disease.

Tending to a dying relative? I share how I inter-meditated with my mother as she was dying, and how she and I continue to meditate together to this day. This isn't some simple fantasy or helicopter-parent-from-beyond story.

Devastated by moment-to-moment tragedies in the news? In these pages, you'll learn to breathe, summon Bodhisattva intent, and meditate with *the world* using newspapers, television, and handheld devices—rather than remaining distracted by their insistent interruptions. Co-meditation is how we're *with it* rather than *against it*—whatever *it* is or momentarily happens to be. What I call *webitation* can help us turn social media into spiritual media and the Internet into Indra's Cosmic Web.

When I hear my Christian friends talk about the communion of the Holy Spirit, I remember that the Greek root word for communion, *koinonia*, may just as easily be rendered as “transformation” or “communication” or “companionship.” It could apply to a business partnership, a union of lives in marriage, a spiritual relationship with any interpretation of God, a fellowship between friends—all of which suggest joint or joined spirituality. *Koinonia* is inter-meditation at its best.

My old friend Baba Ram Dass, a.k.a. Richard Alpert—who likes to call me LSD, so my mother cleverly nicknamed him “Baba Rum Raisin” in return—recently reminded me of a story told by our beloved late guru, Neem Karoli Baba (Maharajji). It’s about the metaphorical nature of the entire Hindu pantheon and the need to go beyond seeking God outside ourselves. Maharajji said, “We look for God in all the wrong places. He’s hiding in the last place we ever look, within our own hearts and souls. We think we’re chasing after and following Him, but it’s more like He’s trying to catch us and we’re running away!”

Inter-meditation is inclusive; it’s not about getting rid of anything—people, feelings, or events. It’s not about meditating *on* or separate *from*, but *with*, always with. Remember the lines from the Beatles song: “And the time will come when you see we’re all one. And life flows on within you and without you.” No separation here—so why unravel ourselves from the exquisite fabric we’re woven into? Why should we disengage from the whole and then struggle and yearn for reunion?

There are everyday “real world” consequences when we genuinely begin to inter-meditate. We find that we’re better friends, better parents, better lovers, and better workers. We’re better listeners—more tuned in. The mundane becomes co-emergent with the sacred. Inter-meditation brings genuine peace and tranquility, regardless of the high-decibel chaos surrounding us. And it’s not just the lamas and priests and gurus that are attesting to this—neuroscientists like Richard Davidson and Dan Siegel are in the news because they’re proving in their laboratories and research centers things that the Buddha discovered under a fig tree over two thousand years ago.

Our world is increasingly interconnected, interdependent. We regularly see vivid examples in the news of the butterfly effect—the

phenomenon in which a tiny localized change in a complex system can have momentous consequences elsewhere. Though people generally think of Buddhism as an introspective and meditating religion, His Holiness the Dalai Lama himself often says—humbly yet with genuine authority—that we need each other to become enlightened. After a lifetime of apprenticeship with extraordinary teachers, I have been astonished to learn of the profundity of ordinary people of all kinds, and that true transformation—if it is authentic, meaningful, and enduring—must include collective awakening as well as effect systemic change.

The Buddha spent forty-five years meditating with the multitudes. He famously proclaimed, “Good spiritual friends are the whole of the holy life. Find refuge in the Sangha, in kindred spirits, and in community.” Jesus told his followers, “For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them.” Martin Luther King Jr. said his goal was to “create a beloved community and this will require a qualitative change in our souls as well as a quantitative change in our lives.” Here is the heart and soul of inter-meditation via interbeing. The Jewish wisdom-book the Talmud teaches, “And whoever saves a life, it is considered as if he saved an entire world.” The great Persian poet Rumi sings, “Every prophet sought out companions. A wall standing alone is useless, but put three or four walls together, and they’ll support a roof and keep the grain dry and safe.”¹ Nobody can do it alone. Believe me, I’ve tried!

In this book I draw on the universal wisdom of the ages and combine it with my own realizations to help upend assumptions about meditation and spirituality. The more we practice inter-meditation, the more we’ll want to practice it. I share new techniques as well as interpret traditional Buddhist wisdom,

particularly Tonglen (giving and receiving) and Lojong (attitude transformation and spiritual refinement) in ways new and old for the modern seeker. These practices dovetail with teachings involving yoga, meditation, scripture study, mind training and attitude transformation, and the sacred ritual and tantric energy in which Tibetan Buddhism is grounded. Co-meditation is a potent path of merging, unity consciousness, and backyard spirituality—not mere withdrawal, quietism, narcissism, or solipsism—which helps us integrate every aspect of our lives into our sacred journeys and every aspect of our sacred journeys into our lives.

We're all engaged in relationships—with others, with ourselves, with animals, nature, and the Divine—with something beyond ourselves. How we relate to people and things defines us and informs all of our actions. Human beings hunger for deeper and more authentic connection within those relationships. Not even a hermit in a cave is in isolation; weather, animals, microbes, food and drink, and memories involving other people exist with and within him or her. Our interwoven connections are essential for spiritual growth and evolutionary development. They help us find meaning and purpose, feel joy and love—human as well as divine. They provide the pigment that stands out from the almost-neutral palette of consciousness. By practicing intermeditation we can delight in a state of true interbeing beyond words and concepts, names and forms, while realizing the very best in others and ourselves. Practice is perfect, and we just do it—just as practice *does* us, in the tides of spiritual activity. We are surfing the cresting wave of evolution, which is really just the froth and bubbling effulgence of nowness-awareness, the sparkles in God's eye.

Let's dive into the flow.

Ten Keys to Inter-Meditation: What Oneness Feels Like

1. **Authenticity**—which arises from attention, honesty, and pure presence (of mind and heart)
2. **Selflessness**—a Big-Self-interest that goes beyond selfish, with a little bit of healthy individuation so we can take care of and be responsible for ourselves
3. **Generosity**—giving of ourselves and sharing things, emotions, energy, time, and wisdom
4. **Patience**—our commitment to forbearance, tolerance, acceptance, flexibility, and resilience
5. **Trust**—seeing who or what we're inter-meditating with as a gateway to the Divine, as the mutual respect this encourages is necessary for love
6. **Genuine love**—empathic compassion, benevolence, and caring
7. **Delight, joy, pleasure, play, fun**—we don't need to take all of this (or ourselves) so seriously
8. **Passion, enchantment, ardor, interest in *other***—this inquiring mind-state is one of wonderment and goes deeper, is more empathically connected and altruistic, than mere curiosity or fascination
9. **Openness**—to the mystery, to not knowing, to not having it all worked out, and to life that is larger than our individual minds and wills
10. **A meaningful, mutual purpose and direction**—we're doing this for the benefit of both ourselves and others, always remembering that there is no real difference in the bigger picture