

Dealing with Afflictive Feelings in Times of Grief

Physical Preparation

- Sit quietly
- Allow eyes to close
- Take several deep cleansing breaths
- Be present in your body
- Pay attention to the various parts of the body
- Scan the body, relaxing muscles, letting tension flow away

Connecting with the Heart Center

- Move awareness to heart center
 - Location of the heart center is near the solar plexus, the center of the chest
 - Feel the rise & fall of the breath from this area
- Importance of the heart center
 - The seat of our feelings
 - Pains, emotions, joys emanate from here
 - Our thoughts and body are influenced by what arises here

O Sun of Dust!
All that is in heaven and earth I have ordained for thee,
except the human heart, which I have made the habitation
of My beauty and glory; yet thou didst give My home and
dwelling to another than Me; and whenever the manifestation
of My holiness sought His own abode, a stranger found He
there, and, homeless, hastened unto the sanctuary of the
Beloved. Notwithstanding I have concealed thy
secret and desired not thy shame.
(Bahá'u'lláh, The Persian Hidden Words, #27)

- Feel the breath coming from this heart center
- Use this as your anchor during this meditation – return here when lost or confused

Reflecting on the Feelings Associated with Loss

Sadness/grief

Lamentation of the loss of the loved one
I am not complete without this one

Fear

What will become of me?
How will I go on?
What will I do alone?
I will always feel this way
I come closer to seeing that I too will die

Anger

How could this loved one leave me?
How could God let this happen?
How can the world go on as if nothing has happened?
Where is my support?
 My family support?
 Where are my friends?
 Where is my community in this time of need?

Self-Judgment

I should have been a better partner, child, parent, or friend
How can I have impure, angry, or unkind thoughts?
I should be grieving more
I should be done grieving

Look to See the Nature of These Thoughts and Feelings

They are impermanent

 Watch them come and go

 They stay only a short while, then something else arises

 They may return often, but they are not solid and permanent

 Can you see them as visitors?

They are all asking for things to be different than things are in this moment

 They seek to make the pain go away

 They ultimately seek your safety and peace, but have no knowledge of how to get that

 They may thrash about and be of no value but they seem to have your best interest at their root

 Some are subtle, some are violent

But they are just thoughts and feelings

 They have no power if we do not engage them

 Their power over us comes from our believing them to be real, to be true

 When we believe them, when we engage them, we suffer

 When we identify with them, they beget more of the same; they strengthen

We cannot determine whether the thoughts enter the mind, but we can control whether we engage them

We cannot control the feelings that arise, but we can control whether we identify with them

Envision the Thoughts and Feelings to Be the Clouds in the Sky

Begin by opening to their presence

Do not push them away

Do not deny they are there

Then identify what is happening, with a single word or short phrase

Sadness

Anger

Judgment

Fear

Envision that the thought or feeling has edges to it, like a cloud in the sky

Connect with the heart space in which the feeling is happening, and allow the feeling to happen

Be aware that the thought is just a thought - it is not who you really are

In this space, it is just a feeling that is happening - it has nothing to do with who you are

Notice how the feeling changes, even as it is present in you

It moves, changes intensity, may even become a different feeling

If watched closely, you may be able to see that it is constantly changing, never solid and stationary

When it is ready, the feeling will fade or drift away

Imagine this as a cloud evaporating or drifting out of view in the distance

See that who you are is not touched by this visiting feeling and its thoughts

Look Also at the Heart Space

It is where these feelings are, but it is not these feelings

It is the space that these feelings and thoughts appear in

It is the sky - the feelings are the clouds

Just as the clouds cannot change the sky, the feelings and thoughts cannot touch our heart space

See for yourself that behind the feelings and thoughts, there is light, freedom

What is it that does not change?

What is it that remains after the most violent of thoughts or feelings?

What is it that is eternal and changeless?

*Turn your faces away from the contemplation
of your own finite selves and fix your eyes upon
the everlasting radiance, then will your souls receive
in full measure the divine powers of the Holy Spirit
and the blessing of the infinite bounty. ('Abdu'l-Bahá, Paris Talks, p. 166)*

Connecting with the Heart

See that after the feeling has left, there is peace and contentment

See that after the feeling has left, there is only light and space

See that this light and space has always been there

it was simply obscured by the clouds of feeling and thought that arose

Rest in this light and space

As thoughts arise, allow them to drift through

As feelings arise, allow them to float by

As the thoughts and feelings are present, know that they are of this world, of the self

They have no permanent and substantial essence

They cannot touch the heart space in which they are visitors

*O SON OF BEING! If thine heart be set upon
this eternal, imperishable dominion, and this
ancient, everlasting life, forsake this mortal
and fleeting sovereignty. (Bahá'u'lláh, Hidden Words, #54)*