

Touching Everything and Letting It All Fall Away

Compassionate Exchange is a way to use self-transcending and self-sacrificial care and compassion to move freely through all perspectives instead of staying chronically identified with only one. In this meditative practice, we consciously and deliberately exchange self for other. That is, we practice taking on the “other’s” perspective and regarding the self as if it were the “other,” benefiting other *at the expense* of the self, reversing the usual orientation of the ego.

Most creatures tend to move toward pleasure and away from pain. We move instinctually to defend the self from discomfort and harm, and to meet the needs and fulfill the wants of the self. In Compassionate Exchange, we dissolve the armor that builds up around this limited, survival-based orientation.

In fact, we reverse the self’s usual orientation and *breathe in* suffering, and then *breathe out* the pleasurable release of suffering. We reclaim the tremendous energy and freedom that result from reversing the automatic tendency of seeking pleasure and avoiding pain.

To state it most simply, in Compassionate Exchange, the “I” moves into awareness and care for “you,” and “us,” and “them,” and back to “me”—the self. Then the “I” rests in the Self of the self—the Witness in which all perspectives arise.