

## Exercise 7: Perfect Nurturer Meditation

Find a comfortable position, sitting upright and relaxed. Gently close your eyes. Take a few deep breaths with your shoulders back. Settle into your body, and into the present moment. For a moment, use a physical gesture, like placing your hands over your heart, as a reminder to give yourself *loving* attention.

Now imagine yourself in a place that is completely safe. This may be a real place or an imaginary one. It could be a simple room with the furniture and lighting just right, just the way you like it. Or it could be a calm sunlit beach, a cozy log cabin, whatever helps you feel safe and soothed. This place welcomes your presence with great warmth and takes joy in your being there.

You'll soon receive a visitor in your room, a perfect nurturer who embodies the qualities of wisdom, strength, warmth and unconditional acceptance. Imagine your perfect nurturer as vividly as you can. Your perfect nurturer is *your* creation, your own personal ideal. This being is completely committed to your welfare, to helping you cope with difficulties, and to taking joy in your happiness. The perfect nurturer has great wisdom and strength of mind that is not overwhelmed by your pain or distress. Your perfect nurturer sees when you are in pain and responds with warmth and unconditional kindness. They understand your struggles and accept you exactly as you are, never judging or criticizing. Continue to focus your attention on this image. It's okay if you don't see the image in a very clear way - the key is to focus on the compassion coming from your perfect nurturer, and to practice receiving this compassion.

Your perfect nurturer would like to visit you for a little while. Your room has a door that you can open. You open the door and invite them in. Place yourself at just the right distance, not too close, not too far. See your perfect nurturer in your mind's eye and enjoy the good company of this loving being. There is nothing special you need to do except savor the moment. Imagine your perfect nurturer's compassion flowing over and around you. If you want to be held, or to touch his or her hand, that's fine. Only allow your perfect nurturer to be with you in a way that you feel comfortable with – a way that helps you feel safe and soothed. Focus on your compassionate visitor, who is looking at you with great warmth. Imagine your perfect nurturer has the following hopes and wishes for you: That you be well. That you be happy. That you be free of suffering. Allow yourself to sit with and open up to these experiences of compassion, knowing you can always rely on your perfect nurturer's strength, wisdom, and acceptance.

Your perfect nurturer may have something to tell you that is *just what you need to hear right now* in your life. If you can, imagine what might be said to you, to help you have the courage, wisdom, and strength to face your difficulties. Listen carefully. And if no words come, that's okay, too. Just share their good company. Just be with your perfect nurturer, experiencing their

## Exercise 7: Perfect Nurturer Meditation (cont.)

warmth and kindness, strength and wisdom. Allow yourself to savor the feelings of safeness, comfort, and connectedness for a while.

You may notice that your mind wanders, perhaps to memories of times when people have not been compassionate toward you. This is perfectly normal. Anytime your mind wanders, just gently bring your mind back to focusing attention on experiencing compassion from your perfect nurturer, to savoring the experience of being with someone who values you completely and cares about you unconditionally.

Soon it will be time for your perfect nurturer to leave, but he or she can return anytime. For a few last moments, enjoy their good company, and then say goodbye for now. You are now alone in your safe place again. Let yourself savor what just happened, enjoying the warmth left by your perfect nurturer and any words that may have been said. Know that you can invite your perfect nurturer back anytime you wish. When you're ready, slowly open your eyes.