

# Tonglin

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Al Cotton ... writes about a Tibetan Buddhist practice based in the Bodhisattva spirituality of taking on oneself the suffering of the world:

"Tonglin" practice is an amazingly simple example of how to practice letting go. It starts with basic human nature, the idea that we tend to draw toward us the things that we like, and push away from us the things that we don't like. We need to let go of both of those habits, detach completely from the idea that we can pull good things toward us and push bad things away. Tonglin practice begins with about 10 minutes of meditation to clear the mind of discursive thought, and then when you start, you breathe in anger and aggression and anxiety and stress, and then as you breathe out, you breathe out compassion and love to the world. So that you are consciously bringing into you the thing that you push away, and send out into the world the thing you would grasp and hold onto.

This simple practice has the possibility of truly transforming the world. Imagine how things might be if just one person stopped creating aggressive energy. For example, two people are driving in traffic; one of them passes the other; that makes the second mad so he passes her back, and back and forth till they have a wreck. Then both go on into work and each make life miserable for 50 more other people all day long. 102 people are stressed out. If only at the very beginning, one of those two had been able to take that aggressive energy in and send out love, that day would have been very different. A gay version of tonglin would be to breathe in shame, and breathe out pride.

Joseph Kramer describes a variation: Soygal Rinpoche, in the Tibetan Book of Living and Dying, describes tonglin as breathing in

**what is to be healed or transformed through your heart and beyond to the heart of the Buddha (or the Christ or whatever). Then, on the exhale, you breathe the healing or transformation from the heart beyond yourself through your own heart to others.**

**Soygal says that if you think you are doing the "work" (the healing, the transformation, etc.), you will get sick. If the inhale stops with you, the toxicity will stop with you. He says the practice should constantly remind us that our intention and breath are just a vehicle to connect us to something beyond. For the last seven years I have been teaching a practice in my classes in Europe based on this. The inner circle kneels. The outer circle stands. The inner circle (mouth close to outer circle's cocks) breathes into the heart of healing all that needs to be healed in the area of sexuality: shame, abuse, lack of mindfulness, etc. The outer circle moves around and receives just 3 breaths of healing with each man kneeling before him. Then the outer circle kneels, the inner circle stands and the practice continues.**