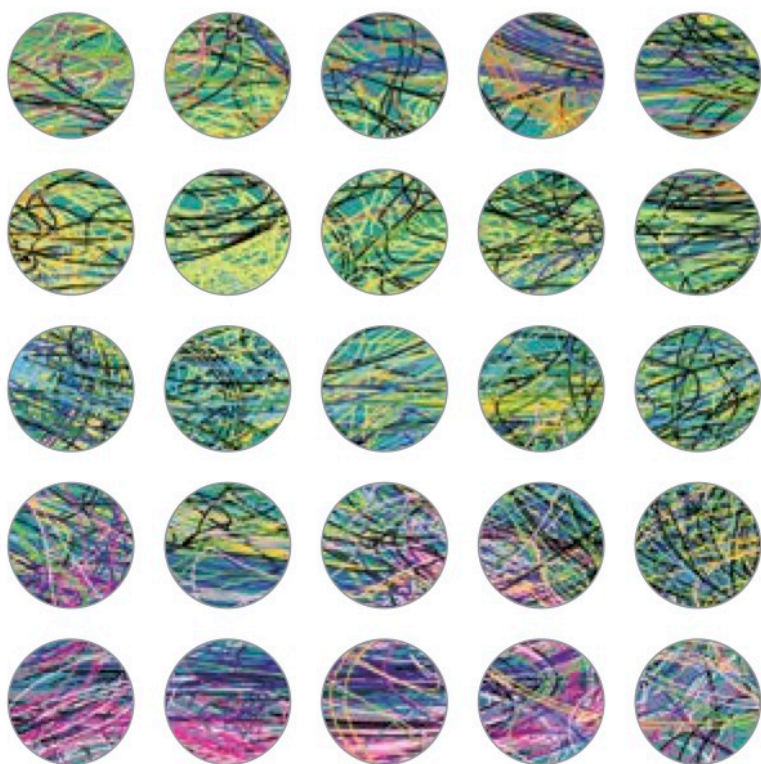


“Broken down into relatable scenarios, Kimberly shares her insight, experiences, and knowledge of loving-kindness meditation to support healing during a crisis.”

—SHARON SALZBERG, author of *Lovingkindness* and *Real Change*



STEADY, CALM, and BRAVE

25 BUDDHIST PRACTICES
OF RESILIENCE AND WISDOM
IN A CRISIS

Kimberly Brown

CHAPTER 1

How Will I Get Through This?

When your mind is narrow, small things agitate you very easily.

Make your mind an ocean.

—Lama Yeshe

If you're having a crisis right now, it might seem surreal. It may have occurred so suddenly that you're in shock. Or it may have been brewing for a long time and you've been worrying about something happening, but now that it's here you can't believe it. That's how Jennifer felt. She and her husband Brian had been married for ten years, and though in many ways they were compatible—both were teachers, she taught at grammar school, he at high school—they were also often in conflict. It was so frequent that many times Jennifer thought they would separate, but each time they managed to work it out. They went to couples' counseling together and learned to be more respectful and empathetic to one another, but they always seemed to return to arguing. Finally last year, a week after Valentine's Day, at the end of another evening of shouting, it was clear to them both that they were at the point of an irretrievable breakdown. When Brian left to stay at a friend's house for the night and Jennifer heard the door close behind him, she sat down on the couch in a daze. Was she getting divorced? What would she do now? What would happen to

her? Could she find an affordable apartment? She wasn't sure what to do next and she felt scared, defeated, and lost.

You also might feel scared, defeated, and lost like Jennifer—and that's okay. The point of this book is not to try to change your emotions or tell you how to feel, but rather to help you to relate to what's happening—both internally and externally—with understanding, insight, and kindness. You can start doing this by slowing down and bringing quiet attention to your body and your heart. This might seem like the last thing you want to do when you're upset, which I understand, because most of us feel the same way. Amid a big problem or potential disaster, you probably have an urge to get things done immediately—decisions need to be made, difficulties must be fixed, and obstacles resolved. But before taking any action, it's important to take care of whatever shock, upset, or distress you're feeling so that your actions are supported by good sense, not clouded by your distress. Jennifer's first instinct was to look on the internet for an apartment, find a lawyer, and drink a glass of wine. Then she called her sister, Teri, who listened to her sobbing on the telephone and said, "Jen, just stop. You have to take care of yourself." To which Jennifer responded angrily, "I am taking care of myself ! Aren't you listening to me?"

When you're in so much pain and upset that you don't know what to do about it and you just want it to stop, that's a sign to bring your attention closer to yourself. Put your hand on your chest and feel your heartbeat and your breath. Say to yourself, "I'm really struggling right now," and take ten deep, full breaths. Repeat as needed.

Taking care of yourself means listening to you. It means offering yourself your loving presence, even if the experience is deep, heavy sorrow or bitter, tight resentment. Some Buddhist teachers describe this as “making room”—when you learn to allow everything to arise in your mind and body without discrimination or judgment. *Making room* is a type of loving attention to what’s actually happening inside of you, however painful it might be, and brings great relief and deep understanding.

You don’t need to stop your feelings or get over them before you slow down to be with them and observe them with love. When you make room, you don’t need to reject or repress any sensations that are uncomfortable or tense. You learn that your mind is spacious and can gently hold all of it—the hurt of abandonment, your impulse to lash out at others, even your self-hating thoughts and beliefs. With loving presence and openness, you realize you don’t need to *do* anything about what you’re experiencing, and you no longer have this type of *dukkha*—the stress and pain caused by trying to get rid of or to deny your feelings—leaving you better able to tolerate your scary, unsettling, or worrisome circumstances.

As you navigate your way through whatever crisis you’re enduring, remember to take care of yourself first, before making decisions, looking for solutions, or casting recriminations so that you don’t add to the struggles you’re facing or make bad decisions driven by fear, desperation, or stupidity. You might not be able to prevent every unexpected danger and loss from occurring, but you can always care for yourself by making room and opening your

You might think you don’t have enough
patience, kindness, or love to make room
for all of the hard things in your life

and in your mind. But in the Buddhist tradition, it's understood that each of us are born with a limitless capacity to care for ourselves and each other—we have all the compassion, love, joy, and wisdom that we need, and we can develop these qualities to an immeasurable capacity. We can make room in our heart for ourselves, each other, and the entire world—to love ourselves and each other indiscriminately and boundlessly.

heart to yourself through patient and loving attention to yourself, no matter what the circumstances.

Order the book at this [link](#) and learn more about the author at www.meditationwithheart.com

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