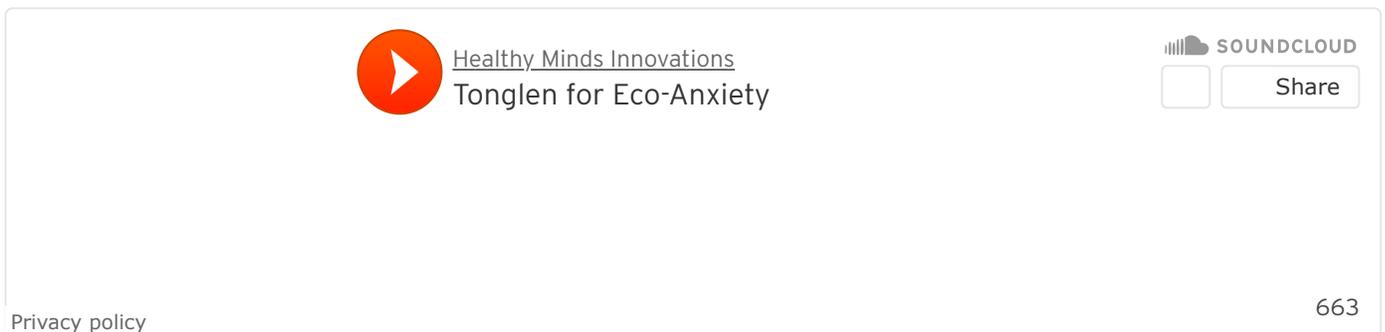


Eco-anxiety is fear and distress regarding the environmental and climate crises we face today. Tonglen is a Tibetan Buddhist meditation practice that focuses on giving and receiving, and can be particularly helpful when dealing with eco-anxiety and climate despair. [Dekila Chungyalpa](#), Director of the [Loka Initiative](#), shares a nine-minute practice designed to transform your eco-anxiety into the motivation to heal others.



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Guided Practice: Tonglen for Eco- Anxiety

Led by Dekila Chungyalpa



Hi, this is Dekila. Thank you for joining me on this session on dealing with eco-anxiety and climate despair. Together, we will work on transforming our fear and distress regarding the environmental and climate crises we face today. I will guide you through a variation of Tonglen, a Tibetan Buddhist meditation practice which means giving and receiving. This is a practice that His Holiness the 17th Karmapa has suggested will be particularly useful for environmentalists and climate activists.

Please start by grounding yourself with the earth beneath you.

Sit comfortably with your spine straight yet relaxed. Extend your awareness to how your body touches your seat or the floor and how through these layers, you are rooted to the earth. Be aware of how the earth holds you up.

There are many reasons why you may be here today; you may be overwhelmed by the news, you may be mourning the loss of lives, you may be afraid of what the future brings or it may be something else entirely. Eco-anxiety can manifest in many ways including grief, anger, vulnerability, sadness, fear. However it manifests, whether in emotion, shape or sensation, I want you to observe it from a short distance and without letting it wash you away.

When you have a good hold of your eco-anxiety, acknowledge it with respect. It is a completely valid response to an existential threat. It means your inner warning system is working and your emotions come from a place of love and compassion for people, for wildlife, and for nature. Take however long you need to honor your eco-anxiety with compassion.

Whatever responses arise, whatever emotions come up, whatever fears show up, let it all flow out of you, and into the earth.

Notice your incoming breath –the air entering your nostrils, your mouth, filling up your belly. All that oxygen that keeps you alive comes from nature. All the food we eat, the clothes we wear, the houses that shelter us come from outside of us. The very basis of our lives is interdependence with the earth. Rest in this awareness and relax here, trusting that you are indivisible from nature.

Breathe in the earth's compassion and breathe out gratitude.

Now comes the hard part. Visualize ONE place or being that is suffering from environmental and climate harm. It could be a person, a river, animals, or your community. Bring to mind how environmental degradation and climate change affects them. When the distress arises, focus on your desire to heal and to care for this entity.

From that place of caring and compassion, imagine yourself with the ability to draw out their suffering when you inhale, and to heal them when you exhale. If it helps, you can imagine their suffering in the form of a fog or vapor and as you inhale, you receive their suffering, and as you exhale, you give them compassion.

This may bring up fear or anxiety. If that happens, simply go back to grounding yourself with the earth and rest in her compassion for you. When you are ready, come back to this practice of giving and receiving. Give them compassion and receive their suffering.

You can do Tonglen practice for as long as you feel comfortable.

At the end of this practice, please reverse the direction of giving and receiving. It is time again for you to receive the earth's compassion and to

offer your gratitude in return. Take a moment to hold in the earth's compassion for you.

Great! As you emerge from this practice, note what it feels like to transform your eco-anxiety into the motivation to heal others. Set the intention to return to this practice whenever you feel depleted. You can also practice short moments of giving gratitude and receiving compassion from the earth throughout your day.

May this practice help you and, through you, may it heal the earth.

Awareness. Connection. Insight. Purpose. We consider these to be four ingredients of a healthy mind. You can train yourself to improve these skills, just like you can develop any habit. This audio practice is provided by [Healthy Minds Innovations \(HMI\)](#), an external, affiliated nonprofit dedicated to supporting the mission of the Center for Healthy Minds. [Want more practices? Try the Healthy Minds Program App.](#)

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