

## Compassionate Meditation



A little over a year ago, an intruder broke into my home. I struggled with feelings of anger and grief and worked hard to allow compassion and forgiveness to take over. The whole experience affected my family's life and it made me realize that I desired to bring compassion and empathy into my life each day.

**We know that grief and anger can affect emotional and mental and physical health, it can also affect spiritual health.**

In order to avoid this and choose love every day, I've started with a tiny meditation-mantra-prayer that goes like this:

Open me to empathy. Let me allow compassion. All who live were born with a spark of humanity, let me see that in everyone's eyes and hearts, whether they are

living this truth or not. Bless me to know and understand that there are chains that bind everyone's hearts, that all humans carry burdens and that I can't possibly know them all. Let my heart be filled with love. I am compassion. I am empathy. I am love.

The following is the statement I made to the court with the accused present. The man who broke in sobbed as I read. It was a great lesson to my daughter and me. May your heart be filled with love, even in the face of adversity.

.....  
**Your honor,**

I wasn't there the day that John broke into my home. I was delivering a Christmas present to a friend. I had left my phone in the car this one time, thinking, "It's a shame we can't live without our phones. Surely it'll be fine for me to leave it behind this one time. What really could happen in the 15 minutes I'm delivering this gift?" Well, what I learned, and the reason we are all here today, is that a lot can happen in 15 minutes. When I got back to my car, there were two missed calls from my seventeen year old daughter. There was also a text. It said, "Mom, someone just broke into our house." My first thought was that she was playing a cruel teenage joke on me to teach me

visit me at [www.melissachappell.com](http://www.melissachappell.com)

a gentler and happier approach to health

## Compassionate Meditation

what could happen if I didn't answer my phone -- then my heart went cold as I realized this may not be a joke. I quickly called her and she answered with a shaky and childlike voice, unlike her normally confident and fiery tone. "Mom, someone just broke into our house." She started crying then. A thousand thoughts raced through my mind: was she hurt? was the intruder still there? had she called 911? had she been sexually assaulted? was my baby hurt? was my baby even still there? had she been taken? I began firing questions at her and she told me she hadn't known what to do so she called me. I checked the times on my phone later that evening and found that exactly seven minutes had passed between her first call to me and when I had finally gotten back to her. My heart broke as I pictured this extremely intelligent and competent young woman being in such a state of shock that she hadn't considered this was an appropriate time to call 911 and that she sat there in terror for seven minutes, afraid to make a move. While on the phone with her, I told her to call 911 and I would call the neighbors and have them rush over because she didn't know whether or not he was still there. She was too scared to call 911 so I worriedly forced myself to hang up with her

and called my neighbors. I had no concern for their safety as I begged them to run to my house and make sure she was safe and that the intruder was gone. I hung up with them, fumbled with my phone to find the number for the police department and drove home as quickly as I could, all the while praying that he wasn't still there, lurking outside, planning a second attempt at getting whatever it was he wanted.

I could go on and on with the story and the events that happened afterward, such as the multiple visits we had with police over the Christmas holidays and the recurring obsessive and disturbing thoughts I had over the next weeks. But I'd like to focus the rest of my statement on bringing my family to life for the court.

I am the single parent of three teenagers and one baby. I've been a single mother for over a decade and I've thought more than once over the years about what I would do, without a partner present to help me defend us, if something like this ever happened. I've often obsessed about windows with broken locks that I didn't have the money to repair. I've considered a hundred times how we would

visit me at [www.melissachappell.com](http://www.melissachappell.com)

a gentler and happier approach to health

## Compassionate Meditation

escape if someone broke in and was blocking the doors. I've thought over and over, as I'm sure every parent does, about the hell that would consume my life, should my daughters ever get raped or any of my children kidnapped. For, not just me, but each one of my children, those possibilities became ever more real as we experienced this event on December 23, 2013.

That night, our family banded together to make sure we were safe. A friend of mine came over to help me make sure that every one of the sixteen windows in my house was either locked, or blocked with a pvc pipe or large stick if the lock was broken. When my oldest son, who is 19 and has his own apartment, learned of what happened, he described in detail to me and his sister, over the phone, what he would have done to physically hurt the intruder. At first I was worried about his desire for violence, then I realized it was his way of processing the event and coping with the intense fear he was feeling over having just learned that his sisters and brother had been in harm's way and he wasn't there to protect them. My youngest son took it upon himself to make a bed for his sister on the floor of his room that night. He collects

camping knives and had taken each one of the out of its sheath and lined them up in a row, blade out so that if the intruder came back in the night, he would be ready to wake up, grab them by the handle and defend her. He was thirteen years old at the time of the incident.

Just last week, my daughter was sitting on the counter in the bathroom, legs crossed, putting on her makeup, just like she was when John broke in last year. She said, "Woah mom, I just got scared." I laughed and said, "Oh did you almost fall off?" And she said, "No, I'm sitting in the same exact place I was when the man broke in and I just got this rush of fear." Two days ago she was painting her room and the rest of us had gone to bed so the house was very still and quiet. She told me that she kept hearing noises and thinking that someone was breaking in and then she smelled smoke and thought that maybe someone was trying to burn our house down. There wasn't any smoke or fire. It was her traumatized mind playing tricks on her.

For me personally, for days and weeks after the incident, I couldn't get two thoughts out of my head. The first: what if he had kidnapped my baby, who was a year and a half old and

visit me at [www.melissachappell.com](http://www.melissachappell.com)

a gentler and happier approach to health

## Compassionate Meditation

was sleeping at the time, and tried to sell her or her little body for drug money, and the second: what if he had raped my older daughter? Where would we be now? How would our lives look?

You see, your honor, while no one was physically hurt in the incident, each member of our family experienced and continues to experience emotional trauma and hurt. I got a dog the next day, who viciously and ferociously protects us when any stranger approaches our house, and that has helped, but my daughter, especially will not feel safe, even when people are around her, for possibly years to come.

I'm not here to read my statement because I want John to "rot in prison" or to hurt in any way. I don't believe he is an evil person and I have no desire for him to be given a punishment that is greater than what his actions deserve. In fact, I have empathy toward him. My first thought, when I saw his mugshot was, "What happened in this man's life to make him end up like this?" I thought of his addiction to drugs and considered my own brother, who too has battled with addiction and has committed his share of petty crimes

while under the influence. So, you understand, I'm not here to give some grandiose lament in hopes that a harsher sentence will be given. My desire to be here is two-fold.

First my hope is that prison will not harden John further, that it won't take away his ability to hope for a better future, but that he will be liberated by it. I obviously don't mean liberated in a physical sense, rather I use that powerful word to describe what I hope will happen to his soul. I hope that he will learn to love himself, that he will unshackle himself from his past and that he will take this time to realize that it's not too late to make a different choice, that he'll slowly unbury that spark of humanity that we are all born with and that he will learn to thrive instead of just blindly surviving. I hope that the system works in this case and that Joshua can be rehabilitated and can become a happy and abundant member of society rather than spending the rest of his one precious gift of life in and out of prisons and jail.

My second hope is to teach my daughter that the American justice system has the ability to work well, and that victims in America, no matter how small or big the crime perpetrated

visit me at [www.melissachappell.com](http://www.melissachappell.com)

a gentler and happier approach to health

illuminating  
articles

[Meditations]

## Compassionate Meditation

upon them, can and *should* and often do have a voice. I want her to look around this courtroom and see all the faces of the people working to this end, and I want her to picture those faces every time she's scared and doesn't feel safe. I want to shore up her faith in a good and kind world and I want her to leave here feeling lighter and more confident in, not only justice, but in America itself and the people who are ultimately working to make the world a more peaceful place.

Thank you, your honor.

*author: melissa chappell*

visit me at [www.melissachappell.com](http://www.melissachappell.com)

a gentler and happier approach to health

Melissa  
Chappell  
.com