

Loving-Kindness Meditation

Start by getting into a comfortable position and allowing your eyes to close gently. And becoming aware of the body and mind and whatever is being carried within—perhaps feelings or thoughts from the day's events or whatever has been going on within you recently. Simply allowing and acknowledging whatever is within and letting it be without evaluation, judgment or any form of analysis.

Gradually, shift the focus of awareness to the breath, breathing normally and naturally. As you breathe in, be aware of breathing in, and as you breathe out, be aware of breathing out. Just being aware of breathing. Now bringing awareness into your chest and heart area, feeling any sensations within. Allowing sensations to go wherever they need to go.

Now gently bring awareness to your beating heart and reflect upon how fragile and precious life is. All of us live with certain realities that cannot be escaped. From the moment we were born we began the irreversible process of aging and subsequent illness, separation and death. These are powerful reflections to meditate upon, for they open the heart to what is important. Now feeling into your own precious life with compassion and kindness, recognizing and accepting the imperfectly perfect being that you are. And silently repeating to yourself the following three phrases, letting them sink into your being:

May I be safe. May I be free from suffering. May I be at peace.

Next, bringing to mind someone you care about, a friend, family member, or other loved one, perhaps even a beloved pet. With a vivid picture in mind, repeating to yourself:

May [they] be safe. May [they] be free from suffering. May [they] be at peace.

Now bringing to mind someone who is going through a difficult time; is perhaps ill or struggling with another problem. Expanding the field of loving-kindness to this person by repeating to yourself:

May [they] be safe. May [they] be free from suffering. May [they] be at peace.

Next, bringing to mind a neutral person, perhaps an acquaintance, someone you may know from work, or who lives in your neighborhood, someone you don't know very well and don't have strong feelings about. Thinking to yourself:

May [they] be safe. May [they] be free from suffering. May [they] be at peace.

Next, thinking of someone who you don't like, perhaps someone who has wronged you in some way, or a politician or other well-known person who you dislike for other reasons. Trying not to get caught up in the reasons for disliking the person you brought to mind, extending compassion to this person as well:

May [they] be safe. May [they] be free from suffering. May [they] be at peace.

Now, bringing to mind everyone you have extended loving-kindness to in this exercise: yourself, the person you care about, the person who is struggling, the neutral person, and the person you don't like.

May they be safe. May they be free from suffering. May they be at peace.

Now, opening up to include everyone in your life and saying to yourself:

May they be safe. May they be free from suffering. May they be at peace.

And now, opening up even more to include all living beings. Repeating to yourself:

May they be safe. May they be free from suffering. May they be at peace.

And now coming back to the breath, and sensing and feeling into the whole body as you breathe in and out. Feeling the body as a single, complete organism, connected and whole. And acknowledging that by practicing this meditation, it is contributing to your health and wellbeing. May you know that this is an act of loving-kindness.