

Loving-Kindness Meditation

To practice loving-kindness meditation, sit in a comfortable and relaxed manner. Take two or three deep breaths with slow, long, and complete exhalations. Let go of any concerns or preoccupations. For a few minutes, feel or imagine your breath moving through the center of your chest and into the area of your heart.

Loving-kindness is first extended to ourselves, as we have difficulty loving others without loving ourselves. Sitting quietly, slowly and steadily repeat to yourself the following or similar phrases:

May I be happy. May I be well. May I be safe. May I be at peace.

While you say these phrases, allow yourself to sink into the intentions they express. To help with your meditation, you might hold an image of yourself in your mind's eye.

After a period of directing loving-kindness towards yourself, bring to mind a person in your life who has deeply cared for you. Hold an image of them in your mind's eye. Then slowly repeat the phrases of loving kindness towards them:

May you be happy. May you be well. May you be safe. May you be at peace.

As you say these phrases, again sink into their intention or heartfelt meaning. Connect to your breath when you feel distracted by thoughts.

Now, bring to mind a person whom you feel neutral towards. Hold an image of them in your mind's eye. Then slowly repeat the phrases of loving kindness towards them:

May you be happy. May you be well. May you be safe. May you be at peace.

Sink into these meaning of these phrases, and reconnect to your breath when you feel carried away by thoughts.

Now, bring to mind an individual who has hurt you or you have difficult feelings towards.

Hold an image of them in your mind's eye. Then slowly repeat the phrases of loving kindness towards them:

May you be happy. May you be well. May you be safe. May you be at peace.

At times during loving-kindness meditations, seemingly opposite feelings such as anger, grief, or sadness may arise. Take these to be signs that your heart is softening, revealing what is held there. Bring mindfulness and compassion to these feelings. Above all, remember that there is no need to judge yourself for having these feelings.

Finally, we return to the self, embodying gentle loving-kindness. Hold an image of yourself in your mind's eye, and slowly repeat the phrases of loving kindness:

May I be happy. May I be well. May I be safe. May I be at peace.