

Exercise 5: Loving-Kindness Meditation

To begin this practice, let yourself be in a relaxed and comfortable position. We are going to practice generating positive emotion. In this case, loving-kindness, which is the desire for someone to be happy or yourself to be happy. It is not dependent on something and it is not conditional. It is just a natural opening of the heart to someone else or to yourself. Check into your body and notice how you are feeling right now. Try to let whatever is here be here.

Now, let yourself bring to mind someone whom, the moment of think of them, you feel happy. See if you can bring to mind – it could be a relative, a close friend - someone with not too complicated a relationship, but just a general sense that when you think of them you feel happy. You can pick a child or you can always choose a pet – a dog or cat- a creature it is easy to feel love for. Let them come to mind. Have a sense of them being in front of you. You can feel them, sense them, even see them. As you imagine them, notice how you're feeling inside. Maybe you feel some warmth, or there's some heat to your face, a smile, a sense of expansiveness. This is loving-kindness. This is a natural feeling that's accessible to all of us at any moment. Now, having this loved one in front of you, begin to wish them well.

May you be safe and protected from danger.

May you be happy and peaceful.

May you be healthy and strong.

May you have ease and well-being.

As I say these words – you can use my words or your own words – have a sense of letting this loving-kindness come from you and begin to touch this loved one reaching out. You might think in images - you might have a sense of color or light. You just might have a feeling - the words may continue to bring on more of this feeling, and I encourage you to say whatever feels meaningful to you.

May you be free from stress and anxiety.

May you be free from all fear.

As you're sending out these words and feelings of loving-kindness, also check in to yourself and see how you're feeling inside. Now, imagine that this loved one turns around and begins to send it back to you. See if you can receive the loving kindness - take it in. They are wishing you well.

May *you* be happy (meaning you).

May you be peaceful and at ease.

May you be safe and protected from all danger.

Exercise 5: Loving Kindness Meditation (cont.)

May you have joy, well-being - letting yourself take it in.

If you're not feeling anything at this point or before the meditation, it's not a problem. This is a practice that plants seeds. If you're feeling something else other than loving-kindness, just check into that. Ask yourself, "What is it I'm feeling?" There may be something to learn here.

If it's possible- and it's not always easy to do this- see if you can send loving-kindness to yourself. You can imagine it coming down your body from your heart, or you can just have a sense of it.

May I be safe and protected from danger.

May I be healthy and strong.

May I be happy and peaceful.

May I accept myself just as I am.

And as you ask yourself the question "What do I need to be happy?" see what arises and offer that to yourself.

May I have meaningful work. A joyful life. Close friends and family.

Check in with yourself and notice how you feel as you do this. Now, let yourself bring to mind one person or a group a people you wish to send the loving-kindness to. Imagine them in front of you – sense them, feel them.

May you be happy and peaceful.

May you be free from all stress, anxiety, fear, worry, and grief.

May you have joy, happiness, and well-being.

And now let this loving kindness expand out- spreading, touching anyone that you want to touch right now, in all directions. This may be people you know, people you don't know, people you have difficulty with, and people you love. Just imagine the expanding and touching. Each person or animal -whoever is touched by this loving-kindness -each person is changed. You can imagine that.

May everyone, everywhere be happy, peaceful, and at ease.

May we all experience great joy.