



Loving Kindness Meditation

In this practice the intention is to extend compassion to ourselves and others. Compassion is a state of mind that is concerned with one's wellbeing, combined with the aspiration to see one relieved of their suffering and the wish for them to be happy. Compassion is a skill that we all have an inherent capacity to cultivate. Take a few moments to set the intention to get in touch with the kind, nurturing part of your being.

When you're ready I invite you to bring to mind the image of a close, loved one, who is regularly kind, warm and loving towards you. Someone who compassion might flow naturally for - perhaps a parent, sibling, child, spouse, family member, or friend. If no one comes to mind try bringing to mind any person you admire or feel gratitude for. Beginning to extend compassion towards this person by silently repeating these words:

May you be at peace and ease.
May you be free from suffering and unhappiness.
May you thrive and reach your full potential.
May you be loved, supported and accepted.
May you experience endless joy and wellbeing.

Feel free to extend any additional words of compassion that you wish to share with this person.

Take a few moments to really notice how you feel in the body as you allow this compassion to flow outward towards this person you love or care about.

When you're ready, try directing this same compassion inward, by silently sharing these same phrases with yourself. If you have difficulty with this, try speaking to yourself from the vantage point of a friend who has your best interest at heart.

May I be at peace and ease.
May I be free from suffering and unhappiness.
May I thrive and reach my full potential.
May I be loved, supported and accepted.
May I experience endless joy and wellbeing.

And any additional words you wish to share yourself.

Notice now how it feels in your body to speak to yourself from a place of kindness and care. Allowing yourself to be with any pleasant feelings that are emanated as you extend this unconditional kindness towards yourself.

And now, seeing if you can bring to mind an acquaintance you view as neutral to you. A person you don't know well or have a relationship with. Someone you neither like or dislike. Maybe this is a colleague, a neighbour, an employee from a store you regularly visit. Holding the image of this person in your mind's eye, seeing if you can extend the same compassion statements, even if it doesn't bring us the same warm feelings as before:

May you be at peace and ease.
May you be free from suffering and unhappiness.
May you thrive and reach your full potential.
May you be loved, supported and accepted.
May you experience endless joy and wellbeing.

Feel free to extend any additional words of compassion that you wish to share with this person.



And now, widening the scope of our compassion bringing to mind a group of people that may be experiencing any form of suffering somewhere in the world. Perhaps a group of people experiencing poverty, injustice, war, or hunger. Maybe choosing a group of people that is dear to your heart or a group you've recently heard about on the news. Even if we can't make a difference to this group in this moment, the practice of compassion can help to change the orientation of your heart and mind, which in turn can go a long way. As you keep this group at the forefront of your awareness, reflect on their basic entitlement to be free from adversity and experience happiness.

May they be at peace and ease.
May they be free from suffering and unhappiness.
May they thrive and reach their full potential.
May they be loved, supported and accepted.
May they experience endless joy and wellbeing.

Feel free to extend any additional words of compassion that you wish to share with this person.

And lastly, seeing if you can make space to invite a person whom you've had difficulty or conflict with, whether currently or in the past. Perhaps trying with a person whom the conflict is about mild to moderate in range. Maybe this is someone whom you are frustrated with, have feelings of resentment towards, you don't get along with, or that you dislike.

As you rest your mind on the image of this person, reflect on their whole being – they are more than this one aspect of difficulty you have with them. They are a human being just like you. Just like you they are deserving of happiness and wellbeing. Just like you they want to be free from suffering and have peace. Just like you they want to be safe and healthy. Just like you they want to be nurtured and supported. While it may be challenging, see if you can build the courage to extend compassion to this individual. Try repeating silently to yourself, even if it doesn't feel genuine at first:

May you be at peace and ease.
May you be free from suffering and unhappiness.
May you thrive and reach your full potential.
May you be loved, supported and accepted.
May you experience endless joy and wellbeing.

Feel free to extend any additional words of compassion that you wish to share with this person.

As this compassion practice comes to a close, allow yourself to bask in any pleasant feelings that may be present after this practice. And if you don't notice anything, just know that the benefits of planting the seeds of compassion in the heart and mind will eventually grow.

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