

LOVINGKINDNESS MEDITATION

You can begin by sitting or lying down in a comfortable position, closing your eyes. Sit with your back erect, without being strained or overarched. Take a few deep breaths, relax your body.

Metta, or loving-kindness meditation is an expression of what you wish most deeply for yourself, not just for today, but in an enduring way. The meditation is simple phrases that are big enough and general enough that you can wish them for all beings everywhere. Classical phrases are things like, “May I live in safety. May I be happy. May I be healthy. May I live with ease.” You can also choose phrases that resonate for you, it does not have to be these specific phrases.

You can gently repeat these phrases over and over again, have your mind rest in the phrases and whenever you find your attention has wandered, don't worry about it. When you recognize you've drifted away from the phrases, see if you can gently bring your mind back and begin again.

We start with wishing well to ourselves. Repeat the phrases slowly and for a chosen period of time or repetitions:

May I be happy,
May I be healthy,
May I be safe,
May I live with ease.

You can next call to mind somebody that you care about—a good friend, or someone who's helped you in your life, someone who inspires you. You can visualize them, say their name to yourself. Get a feeling for their presence, and then direct the phrases of loving-kindness to them.

May you be happy,
May you be healthy,
May you be safe,
May you live with ease.

Call to mind someone you know who's having a difficult time right now. They've experienced a loss, painful feeling, a difficult situation. If somebody like that comes to mind, bring them here.

Imagine them sitting in front of you. Say their name. Get a feeling for their presence and offer the phrases of loving-kindness to them. “May you be happy, healthy, safe and live with ease.”

Think of someone who plays some “neutral” role in your life, some function that you don't know very well, that you don't have a particular feeling for, or against. Maybe the checkout person at the supermarket where you shop, the gas-station attendant, somebody that you see periodically. If someone like that comes to mind, imagine them sitting in front of you, and offer these same phrases of loving-kindness to them. “May you be happy, healthy, safe and live with ease.”

This practice opens us to the possibility of including rather than excluding, connecting, rather than overlooking, and caring rather than being indifferent, both to ourselves and others.

This aspiration can extend infinitely to all beings in a boundless way, leaving no one out, “May all beings be happy, healthy, safe and live with ease.”