

## Loving Kindness Meditation

The purpose of this loving kindness meditation is to develop compassion and kindness for yourself.

We are often very good at being empathic and understanding of others, forgiving and caring for them. Sometimes we can struggle to apply this same kindness and compassion to ourselves. Therefore, if you are new to this practice, at first, this meditation may feel strange, as you may be used to being harsh or criticising of yourself.

This is an exercise in developing empathy and kindness for you in an unconditional way. The more we can be compassionate toward ourselves, the more we will be able to be more accepting of our experiences and understanding.

As you begin, the focus will be on developing compassion and kindness for yourself. You will be guided with some phrase terms that you can use to apply, along with having the option of creating your own terms. You will simply be asked to repeat these phrases to yourself, even if at first you don't believe the phrase. You will be encouraged to try a few phrases, until you find some that you connect with and feel comfortable with.

As the meditation progresses, you will be directed to send kindness and compassionate thoughts to your loved ones, sharing your kindness with them, followed by sending such thoughts to people you are not as close with, ending the practice with sending this compassion to all human beings. In loving kindness, we start with ourselves as we learn to be compassionate and kind towards ourselves it becomes easier for us to share this unconditional love with others.

## Loving Kindness Meditation exercise

To practice loving kindness, find yourself a quiet, comfortable space, free from distraction. You may choose to either sit or to lay down with your legs and arms uncrossed, ensuring that you are in a comfortable position.

You may like to gently close your eyes, or if you feel more comfortable with your eyes open, find a place to focus your attention.

Begin to take two to three deep breaths, as you begin to let go of any tension and focus your attention on parts of the body that are peaceful, where you feel most comfortable in the body. Focus your attention on your heart space, connecting in with the gentle, free flow of sensations in your heart area.

Begin to think kind thoughts towards yourself. Some suggestions may be:

May I be relaxed.

May I be at peace.

May I be happy.

May I be content with what I have.

May I be kind to myself.

You may also like to use your own phrases. These are just my suggestions. Allow yourself the opportunity to find phrases that are most comfortable and meaningful for you.

Gently repeat these phrases to yourself, allowing yourself to connect to the intentions of the thought. As you do this, you may notice pleasant sensations and feelings arising in the body, such as warmth, love or a sense of calm. Allow yourself to connect to these sensations and feelings, allowing them to grow and spread throughout your body, as these feelings deepen, so does your compassion for yourself.

After some quiet time spent directing loving kindness toward yourself, now focus your attention on someone in your life who is important to you, someone who you care very much about, it may be a loved one or a friend.

Next, slowly repeat some phrases of loving kindness toward your loved one:

May they be relaxed.

May they be happy.

May they be content.

May they be safe.

As you do this you may also notice pleasant feelings or sensations arising in your body. Allow yourself to connect to these, as you feel the warmth spread over you.

As you continue practicing loving kindness, you may also like to bring to mind people who you are not so close with, such as a neighbour, a work colleague, or even someone whom you have had conflict with. You may like to use the same phrases, or select new

phrases. Either way, allow yourself to connect to sending thoughts of loving kindness towards these people also.

To end the practice, I now invite you to send kindness and compassionate thoughts to all human beings. Send thoughts such as 'may all beings be relaxed', 'may all beings be happy' and again allow yourself to connect with any pleasant sensations as they arise in the body.

It is now time to finish our meditation. If you have had your eyes closed, I encourage you to gently blink them open and connect yourself back with your surroundings. Take a moment or two before moving onto the next activity for your day, trying to take some of this loving kindness and peace with you.