



RECOVERY DHARMA

Metta (Lovingkindness) Meditation

Find a comfortable but alert position in which to sit. As you allow your eyes to gently close, pay attention to the body and see if there are any minor adjustments that will help you maintain the position for the duration of the meditation. Rest your hands comfortably on your legs or in your lap.

We'll start with a few minutes of concentration practice, just to help our minds settle and arrive in our present time experience. Allow your breathing to be natural, seeing where in the body you can feel the breath most naturally. It may be in the stomach or abdomen, where you can feel the rising and falling as the body breathes. It might be in the chest, where you may notice the expansion and contraction as the body inhales and exhales. Perhaps it's at the nostrils, where you can feel a slight tickle as the air comes in, and the subtle warmth as the body exhales.

Breathing in, just bring a gentle awareness to the breath. Breathing out, be aware of the breath leaving the body.

(Pause)

You may notice the mind wandering. This offers us an opportunity to cultivate mindfulness and concentration. Each time we notice the mind wandering, we're strengthening our ability to recognize our present experience. Each time we bring the mind back to the breath, we strengthen our ability to concentrate. Treat it as an opportunity rather than a problem.

(Pause)

Now begin offering mettā (lovingkindness) to yourself. We start with ourselves because without loving ourselves it is almost impossible to love others.

Breathe gently, and repeat silently to yourself the following phrases, or any other phrases of your choosing that communicate a kind and friendly intention:

“May I be filled with lovingkindness.”

“May I be safe from inner and outer dangers.”

“May I be well in body, heart, and mind.”

“May I be at ease and happy.”

Repeat these phrases several times, perhaps picturing yourself receiving them. If that is difficult, it can sometimes be helpful to picture ourselves as a child receiving this love. Feelings contrary to lovingkindness, like irritation, anger, or doubt, may come up for you. If this happens, be patient with yourself, allowing whatever arises to be received in a spirit of kindness, and then simply return to the phrases.

(two to three minutes of silence)

Now bring to mind someone who has benefitted you or been especially kind. This may be a loved one, a friend, a teacher or mentor. As this person comes to mind, tune into your natural desire to see this person happy, free from suffering, and at ease with life. Begin to offer this person the same phrases of lovingkindness and care:

“May you be filled with lovingkindness.”

“May you be safe from inner and outer dangers.”

“May you be well in body, heart, and mind.”

“May you be at ease and happy.”

(two to three minutes of silence)

Let this person go and bring to mind a neutral person. This is someone you see, maybe regularly, but don't know very well. It may be somebody who works somewhere you go a lot, a coworker, a person you've seen at meetings, or maybe a neighbor.

Although you don't know this person well, you can recognize that just as you wish to be happy, this person wants to be happy as well. You don't need to know what their happiness looks like. Again, offer this person the phrases of lovingkindness:

“May you be filled with lovingkindness.”
“May you be safe from inner and outer dangers.”
“May you be well in body, heart, and mind.”
“May you be at ease and happy.”

(two to three minutes of silence)

Now, letting this neutral person go, think of somebody whom you find difficult, or toward whom you feel a resentment, hurt, or jealousy. You may not want to pick the most difficult person in your life; instead, choose someone who is currently agitating or annoying you.

Again, offer the phrases of lovingkindness, being aware that just as you wish to be happy and free from harm, so do even the most difficult or troublesome people:

“May you be filled with lovingkindness.”
“May you be safe from inner and outer dangers.”
“May you be well in body, heart, and mind.”
“May you be at ease and happy.”

(two to three minutes of silence)

Letting this difficult person go, try to expand your well wishes as wide as you can imagine--to your family, your friends, your community, your city, your state, your country, to all beings on earth. Notice the immense depth of your own heart as you offer these phrases:

“May all beings be filled with lovingkindness.”
“May all beings be safe from inner and outer dangers.”
“May all beings be well in body, heart, and mind.”
“May all beings be at ease and happy.”

(two to three minutes of silence)

Now, letting go of all thoughts of others, return your focus to your own body, mind, and heart. Notice any discomfort, tension, or difficulty you are experiencing. Notice if you are experiencing any new lightness, warmth, relaxation, or joy. Then, whenever you are ready, allow yours eyes to open and gently return your attention to the space around you.