



A Meditation on Loving-Kindness

What is Loving-Kindness?

- The wish that all sentient beings (including yourself) be happy and free of suffering.
- The practice of Loving-Kindness begins with yourself and then gradually radiates outward, like tossing a pebble in a still forest pool which creates ripples in the water. Those ripples come from your heart, embracing yourself; loved ones; friends; strangers; so-called difficult people etc.
- Using words, images and feelings you express an intention, planting the seeds of loving wishes over and over again in your heart.



Practice: the first stage

- Sit comfortably, relax and let go of any mental plans and preoccupations. Let your heart be soft.
- Begin with yourself: relax and breathe naturally. Gently focus your attention on the breath. Do this for as long as you like.
- When ready, inwardly recite the following: 'May I be filled with loving-kindness. May I be safe from all harm. May I be well in body and mind. May I be happy and at peace.'
- As you continue to recite, bring to mind an image of a familiar place/time where you felt safe and loved. Adjust the image and words as you like. Repeat the phrases that open your heart of loving-kindness. Say them again and again, letting the feelings fill your body and mind.
- Note: if the practice at times feels awkward, or you become aware of having feelings contrary to loving-kindness, then be patient and kind toward yourself. Receive whatever arises, with affection, as you would an old friend.
- When you feel a sense of loving-kindness toward yourself growing and maturing move on to the next stage of the meditation, which expands to include other beings. Remember, that this first stage of the practice is about constructing strong foundations for what will later be built upon it.



Expanding the Practice

- When you feel that you have established a stronger sense of being able to practise loving-kindness for yourself, then expand it to include others. Note: some people, who find the first stage of the meditation difficult, may choose to reverse the order and begin by focusing on a benefactor, before moving on to practise loving-kindness for themselves. Do whatever helps to open your heart.
- After focusing the meditation on yourself for about ten minutes, choose a benefactor, someone who has truly loved or cared for you. Picture this being, and inwardly recite the following: 'May you be filled with loving-kindness. May you be safe from all harm. May you be well in body and mind. May you be happy and at peace.'
- Let the image and feelings you have for your benefactor support the meditation. Do not worry if the image or feelings are not clear. What matters are your intentions. Just continue to plant the seeds of loving-kindness in your heart. Gently repeat the phrases no matter what arises.
- As you feel better able to express love and gratitude to your benefactor/s, then you can gradually expand the meditation to include friends; strangers; and so-called difficult people. Eventually, you will be able to sincerely extend your loving-kindness to embrace all beings, without exception. 'May all beings be filled with loving-kindness. May all beings be safe from harm. May all beings be well in body and mind. May all beings be happy and at peace.'

