

Lovingkindness Meditation Instructions

Traditionally this meditation begins with the self. I find that in your culture it is very difficult for many people to offer loving wishes to themselves so we begin with one to whom it is easier to offer such thoughts and then come around to the self.

This is not forgiveness, which is a further step, but only opening your heart to the pain, the pain of all beings, and wishing them well.

There is no wrong or right way to do this practice. If resistance arises, simply note it and re-enter the meditation in whatever way you are able. You are not requested to dive all the way in but only to enter as deeply as is comfortable.

As you work with this practice, please modify it and make it your own.

- Aaron

(To be read to/by a friend or done by oneself. Space indicates a pause. The word "pause" indicates a longer pause.)

Aaron: Find a comfortable position, body relaxed, back erect, eyes closed softly.

Bring to the heart and mind the image of one who for whom there is loving respect. This may be a dear friend, parent, teacher or any being with whom the primary relationship is one in which you have been nurtured.

Look deeply at that being, deeper than you ever have before, and see that he or she has suffered. He has felt pain of the body or the heart. She has known grief, loss and fear. He has felt loneliness and disconnection. She has lost and confused. See the ways this dear one has suffered.

Speaking silently from the heart, note this one's pain, offering first the name:

You have suffered. I see how you have felt alone, afraid, in pain. You have felt grief. You have felt alienated, felt your heart closed. Your life has not always brought you what you might have wished for.

What loving thoughts can you offer this dear one? Let the thoughts come with the breath, arising and moving out.

May you be free of suffering.

May you be happy.

May you love and be loved.

May you find the healing that you seek.

Please continue silently, repeating these phrases for several minutes. Go slowly. Allow your heart to connect with this dear one, to open to his/her pain and offer these wishes, prompted by the loving heart.

May you find peace.

Please continue silently, repeating these phrases for several minutes. Go slowly. Allow your heart to connect with this dear one, to open to his/her pain and offer these wishes, prompted by the loving heart.

(Pause)

Now let this loved one move aside and in his / her place invite in your own self. It is sometimes so hard to open our hearts to ourselves. What blocks that love? Just for experiment sake, please follow the practice and see how it feels, even if it is difficult.

Look deeply at the self and observe that, just as with the loved one, you have suffered. You have felt pain of the body or the heart. You have known grief, loss and fear. You have felt loneliness and disconnection, felt lost and confused. See the ways you have suffered. Without engaging in maudlin self-pity, simply observe the wounds you have borne.

Speaking silently from the heart, this time to your own self. Offer your name:

I have suffered. I see how I have felt alone, afraid, in pain. I have felt grief. I have felt alienated, felt my heart closed. My life has not always brought I what I might have wished for.

What do you wish for yourself?

May I be free of suffering.

May I be happy.

Now let the self move aside and in its place invite in one with whom there has been hard feeling. Best not to choose the heaviest relationship at first but allow practice with less difficult pain and move slowly to the heavier emotions.

It is so painful to maintain that separation. A wise teacher has said, "Never put anyone out of your heart." What blocks opening?

Letting go ...

Just for experiment sake, please follow the practice and see how it feels, even if it is difficult. Please express your own pain too, as you speak to this one. Can you feel the space where your pain is one?

Give this one's name. Speak from your heart.

You have hurt me, through your words, your acts, even your thoughts.

Through what came from you I have experienced pain.

Yet when I look deeply, I see that you have also known pain. You have suffered. I see how you have felt alone, afraid, in pain. You have felt grief. You have felt alienated, felt your heart closed. Your life has not always brought you what you might have wished for.

May you be free of suffering.

May you be happy.

May you love and be loved.

May you find the healing that you seek.

May you find peace.

Please continue silently, repeating these phrases for several minutes. Go slowly. Allow your heart to connect with this one, to open to his/her pain and offer these wishes, prompted by the loving heart. I will be quiet.

(Pause)

Throughout the world, beings suffer. Not only humans but plants, insects, animals, even the earth herself.

May all beings everywhere be free of suffering.
May all beings be happy.

(Bell)

May all love and be loved.
May all find the healing that they seek.

(Bell)

May all beings everywhere find perfect peace.

(Bell)