

Introduction to Lovingkindness (Mettā) Class 2 of 4

Some ideas to consider:

- Kindness and gentleness with your own experience also has a beneficial effect on others.
- The benefits of Metta **always** touch the practitioner first, regardless of who the recipient is
- It's about cultivating intentions; emotional tone may or may not be obvious at first.
- Whether or not emotions of any kind arise, cultivate an a gentle, kind, attitude towards your experience

During formal practice, please consider experimenting with:

- Offering metta on the out-breath, receiving it on the in-breath.
- Trying “the turnaround” from dear one or benefactor to self.

Micro-practice suggestion

Take special care to appreciate good intentions, attributes and behaviors in yourself. Notice any shifts in how you perceive the good attributes, intentions, or behaviors of others. What does it take to be your own best friend?

Some Benefits of Metta Practice (sources on audiodharma.org)

Benefits in Buddhist literature

Concentration
Sleeping and waking in comfort
Absence of bad dreams
Being dear to humans and non-humans
Protection from fire, poison, and weapons
A serene complexion
A calm and unconfused death
Auspicious rebirth, if not liberation

Supported by scientific studies

Easy concentration
Improved sleep
Increased social confidence
Improved relationships
Improved immune response
More optimism and purpose
Less reactivity to pain
More calm in difficult situations

Reflections on Benevolence

May I abide in well-being,
in freedom from affliction,
in freedom from hostility,
in freedom from ill-will,
in freedom from anxiety,
and may I maintain well-being in myself.

May everyone abide in well-being,
in freedom from hostility,
in freedom from ill-will
in freedom from anxiety,
and may they maintain well-being in themselves
(Amaravati Sangha translation)

Meditation guidelines (20 minutes or more recommended)

Class recordings and handouts posted on Audiodharma.org

This week, consider experimenting with spending the first one-third to half of your meditation practicing mindfulness meditation, beginning mettā after your body and mind settle a bit. Notice what works for you...

If you are new to meditation, please consider attending a beginner's instructional session at IMC (6:15pm Thursdays). Otherwise, you may follow the practice below, and/or use class recordings.

In Lovingkindness meditation, it is helpful to take a comfortable posture. See if you can also take an internal posture, in your heart, and regard yourself in a kindly way, with the same tenderness, even respect or reverence you might offer a little child or sleeping baby animal.

If it's helpful, take two or three slow, breaths, deep in your belly. Exhaling slowly and completely through pursed lips, if that works for you. Then, release all tension in the belly and allow the air to flow in naturally. Allow the breath to be natural, noticing if it soothes or softens you. Breathing in appreciation for your life's breath. Letting go of the outbreath, offering it as goodwill.

Allowing attention to collect around your heart center. Bring to mind a person or being who is dear to you, inspires you, or you feel gratitude towards. A benefactor, or a dear friend. Without a lot of internal discussion, feel what you appreciate about them. Briefly recall some of their good qualities or actions you are grateful for. Reconnecting with the breath, focus your intentions with phrases:

- *May you be happy*
- *May you be well*
- *May you be safe (from inner and outer harm)*
- *May you be at ease*

After each phrase, **pause**. Noticing how it feels in your body to be offering goodwill. From time to time, rest and be with whatever you feel in your heart center. Then, turn this kind awareness, to your breath and body, seeing yourself through their eyes. Some people find it helpful to smile gently, place their hand on your heart center, or to hug themselves.

With each breath, allowing breath and wishes for kindness to radiate through your whole body. Clarifying your intentions with simple phrases such as these, or making your own:

- *May I be happy* _____
- *May I be well* _____
- *May I be safe (from inner and outer harm)* _____
- *May I know ease and joy* _____
- *Just like me, all beings want to be happy, safe, at ease.*

Pausing occasionally, receive, be with, whatever resonates in your body and heart. For the last period of time, let go of any phrases, soften into the moment. Allow feelings, sensations, to come and go.

Closing Reflection: Opening the heart's capacity to feel and express love, kindness, and appreciation offers a gift to everyone this life touches. Take a moment to appreciate the generosity of cultivating lovingkindness.