

Loving Kindness Meditation Instructions

Loving Kindness practice is a mantra-based meditation, meaning we focus our attention on one or more phrases we repeat silently to ourselves. In Loving Kindness, we use these phrases to direct a sense of goodwill and friendliness to ourselves and others. There are many phrases that can be used, but Loving Kindness phrases typically have to do with themes of safety, peace, happiness, health, and being at ease.

In Loving Kindness practice, we direct our attention to different categories of people. This can be done sequentially in one sitting or we can choose to spend the entire practice time on one category. However, you choose to spend your practice time, it is generally recommended to finish a session of Loving Kindness by saying the phrases for All Beings.

The categories of Loving Kindness are:

1. Yourself
2. Benefactor – someone who has advised you or helped you and affected your life in a positive way. This could be a person you know or someone who has influenced you from a far (ie. the Dalai Lama)
3. Friend
4. Neutral Person – someone you have met but do not know well and do not have strong feelings about (ie. the cashier who checks you out at the grocery store)
5. Difficult Person – someone with whom you have conflict or negative feelings. PLEASE NOTE, when starting Loving Kindness meditation is best to start with someone who is mildly annoying, not the most difficult person in your life.
6. All Sentient Beings

Initially, you may find it challenging to say Loving Kindness for yourself, but you can and should do Loving Kindness for yourself frequently. Learning to love and accept yourself is the first step in loving others.

There are an infinite number of possible Loving Kindness phrases. Most people settle on three or four phrases to repeat sequentially. Phrases can be said for yourself using the word “I,” for another using the word “you,” and for all beings using the word “we.” So, iterations would be, “may I be safe,” “may you be safe,” “may we be safe.” Below, you will find a series of sample phrases to get you started.

Simple Phrases:

May I/you/we be safe
May I/you/we be happy
May I/you/we be peaceful
May I/you/we be healthy
May I/you/we be at ease

Longer Phrases:

May I/you/we be safe from inner and outer harm
May I/you/we be peaceful and happy
May I/you/we be strong and healthy
May I/you/we live with ease and well-being

Phrases to Work with Difficult Aspects of Yourself

May I/you/we accept and embrace this tendency/aspect of myself

May I/you/we continue to work with it for the benefit of all living beings including myself.

May I/you/we accept myself just as I am.

Additional Phrases for Loving Kindness:

May I/you/we be filled with Loving Kindness

May I/you/we be well in body and mind

May I/you/we be at ease and happy.

May I/you/we be as well as I am able to be

May I/you/we touch deep, natural peace.

May I/you/we know the natural joy of being alive.

May I/you/we find true refuge within my own being.

May I/you/we be free.

May there be peace on earth, peace everywhere.

May I/you/we know peace in our time.

May all beings be free.

Finally, you may wish to take a pen and paper and write down your own phrases. To get started, you can ask yourself:

- 1) "What do I need?"
- 2) "If I could, what do I need to hear from others?"

There are also more **informal** ways to practice Loving Kindness. One thing you might try is beginning interactions with others by silently saying yourself one Loving Kindness phrase like "may we all be happy." You can imagine how different the world would be if we all said Loving Kindness phrases in our daily life.