**Loving-kindness meditation**

Loving-kindness meditation has its origins within Buddhism, from a tradition called “metta”. It takes many forms, with blessings and prayers focused around peace, happiness, compassion, universal love, and freedom from pain. While it does have this origin, practising it does not require any specific belief or adherence to any particular theology.

Prayer, blessing, meditation, all of these are deeply personal things, and we can only interpret them based on how we experience them. We believe whatever we want to believe. Many attribute this practice to gaining a deeper connection with something divine, the soul, the spirit, the one, God, the light. To something ethereal. Whatever it is, it has countless names. The choice is yours what to believe in, and will depend on how you, and no-one else experiences, your meditation.

This meditation is adapted from Dr. Joan Borysenko, and her book, Fire in the Soul, which was first published in 1993.

The target of focus during this meditation can be anyone you like. Yourself, your loved ones, your friends, family, and even those you might be in conflict with. Perhaps even for everyone.

The purpose here is to allow yourself to become present within that higher state. Remember, it does not really matter what you believe in at this point. Whatever is in your heart, this meditation will allow you to connect with it. And it is that process that is more important than adhering to any single interpretation of it.

Let us begin in the usual way.

Hopefully, you are sitting somewhere calm, peaceful, and comfortable. Your own meditation spot. Start by taking a biiiiig stretch, working any tension out from the different parts of your body. Gently, close your eyes, and begin by taking a few of deep breaths. With each exhale, letting go a little bit more, like a big sigh of relief as you settle into yourself. With each breath, just becoming a little more aware of how each one feels.

Let the breath return to its natural rhythm. Let it flow in and out of you, without forcing. Natural and gentle. Notice what it feels like to breathe. How your body rises up gently with each in breath, and settles back down as you breathe out. Notice where you feel the motion of breathing most. Your mouth, your throat, perhaps lower down in your belly region.

Enjoy the sensation of breath moving in and out in natural rhythm. Feeling and observing the flow of each one. Feeling how each outbreath is an opportunity for letting go, all that is inside of you. Each breath, an opportunity to become present in the flow.

Imagine now, a light. A warm, radiant, vibrant light, full of life and energy, and the promise of peace. This light, it can take whatever form you wish. It can move however you want. Let this light enter inside of you, of your mind, of your body. It radiates inside of you, swirling around, dancing through your body as you continue to breathe.

Allow this light to naturally flow through you, within you. Let it pour through you, and fill your entire being, as if you were standing being bathed within a brilliant sunbeam. Breathing it in, and letting it be part of you. Surrounded by its radiance, by its warmth, which fills you and extends around you, forming a large circle of light.

Now, see yourself at twenty, twenty-one years old. Entering the circle. Look into the eyes of this young adult, who is just learning to make their way into the world. Ready to express their own uniqueness. Let them feel your support for all of the joy, all of the sorrow, and all of the trials and learnings you know are in store for them.

See yourself now younger, at twelve or thirteen years old. On the brink of adulthood, entering the circle now too, and connecting hands, together with your young adult self. Look into the eyes of this young person who is just beginning to feel the stirrings of the lifeforce as sexuality. What do you wish that someone had told you about being an adult? Look into the eyes of your changing, adult self, and speak those words to them.

See yourself at seven years old, entering the circle of light and holding hands now with your twelve-year-old self. Enjoy the radiance and innocence of this beautiful little being, who values intuition as much as intellect. Beginning to understand how the world works, with a beautiful curiosity.

And now, behold. Another light enters the circle, and places your infant self into the arms of your seven-year-old. Look into those eyes, filled with ageless wisdom and new-born innocence. In full knowledge of all that beautiful infant has endured in its search for wisdom and freedom, give it your greatest respect and love.

Now, imagine that you can take all of these children, these versions of you, and tuck them away carefully inside of your heart.

Repeat the following sentence for yourself, out loud:

“May I be at peace. May I know the beauty of my own true nature. May my heart remain open. May I be healed.”

Now, call to mind a friend, a group of friends, or a loved one. Recall them in as much detail as you can. See them in the circle of light, and give them all of your greatest respect and deepest love. Repeat again, out loud.

“May you be at peace. May you know the beauty of your own true nature. May your heart remain open. May you be healed.”

Call to mind now, someone, maybe several people, who you feel in conflict with. See them enter the circle of light, standing there. Picture them in as much detail again as you can. No matter the conflict you have with them, again, give them all of your greatest respect and deepest love. Repeat again, out, loud.

“May you be at peace. May you know the beauty of your own true nature. May your heart remain open. May you be healed.”

See our delicate planet. This jewel in the stars, suspended in the velvet blackness of endless space. Pay homage to all you see, its white clouds, blue waters, and green continents. Imagine its fiery core, burning deep within. Majestic mountains, towers to the sky. All of the plants and animals, together, living and breathing in unity. All in one, all light. Repeat one last time.

“May there be peace on earth. May the hearts of all beings be open to one another. May life reach its fullest potential. May all life reflect the glory of the light.”

Allow yourself again now to feel surrounded by, bathed, and illuminated within the circle of light. If there is anything in your heart that you need to say, to release, do so now.

Continue to rest in that warm, radiant, brilliant light for as long as you need now. This presence that is everywhere, and within you. Thank you, for this gift of life.

[End meditation]

You can extend and adapt this meditation as needed for whatever you feel is needed. You can also cut out whichever bits you don’t need. You can also practice it whenever you like during the day, whenever you feel arises and you might need to send some loving kindness, to anyone, including yourself.

For this meditation, I added some music that I find emotionally engaging as background. But if you want, you can simply re-record this for yourself with any background you wish, or in silence.

In particular, this meditation can have a transformative effect on any negative feelings we might have for others. If we are feeling shameful, angered, hurt, hateful, victimised, this meditation can help to shift your mood and mindset away from a local minimum, or a place where your heart feels stuck, and reorient around a more positive, peaceful mindset.

This meditation can be part of a support framework for internal therapy, complementing other methods, for example, with support groups or traditional psychotherapy. It can help reframe a mindset where we feel stuck identifying as a victim or as dependent, to one in which we have let go, moved on, and are empowered.

In doing so, we train our minds to be more capable for taking practical action towards achieving our goals. Each time we do this, we encourage a healing process within towards a more peaceful state overall. It starts with loving-kindness.