

***Extended Loving Kindness***

Coming to sit in a dignified and alert posture bring your awareness to your breath.

(5 breaths)

And now expanding your awareness to also include a sense of your body as a whole.

Resting here for a while with a moment to moment awareness of your breath and your body. (5 breaths or so)

Now bringing to mind, to whatever degree is possible, someone in your life, now or in the past, who loves you or has loved you, feeling the qualities of selfless love and kindness that they have for you, right here, right now.

If you find some difficulty in bringing to mind such a person in this moment, see if you can imagine someone treating you in that way and imagining with vividness feelings of being loved with kindness and regard. This can serve equally well for this practice.

Holding in your awareness this feeling of being loved, feeling the qualities of selfless love and kindness for you, right here in this moment.

Breathing with these feelings, bathing in them, resting in the warmth and radiance of their heartfelt embracing of you.

Allow yourself to experience the feeling of being unconditionally loved and accepted just as you are, without having to be different. And without having to be worthy of their love or particularly deserving of this love. In fact you may not feel particularly worthy or deserving, but that does not matter. The fact is that these feelings of being loved exist for just who you are.

Allow your own heart to bask in these feelings, to be cradled in them, to be rocked moment by moment in these loving feelings, allowing yourself to be bathed in this way by the warmth of this radiant field of loving kindness.

And as you experience this warmth repeat silently to yourself…..

“May I experience ease and contentment” “May I experience ease and contentment”

“May I be safe and protected” “May I be safe and protected”

As you feel ready, see if you can become the source as well as the object of these same feelings. Taking on these feelings as if they are your own, rather than those of another.

Cradling in your own heart these feelings of love and acceptance and kindness for yourself, beyond judgment of any kind. Resting here in these loving feelings as best you can from moment to moment, bathing in your own kind regard.

Allow yourself to feel your own complete acceptance of yourself as you are, right here, in this very moment. And as you experience this warmth repeat silently to yourself…..

“May I experience ease and contentment”, “May I experience ease and contentment”

“May I be safe and protected”, “May I be safe and protected”

At first it may feel artificial to be saying such things to yourself, but as best as you can stay open and gentle, letting the feelings be self sustaining, natural, not forced or coerced. Even tiny tastes of loving kindness are healing for any negativity or self criticism that we may hold.

And so resting here for a while in the warmth of this radiant field of loving kindness, allowing your heart to be bathed in this way.

If you wish, when you are ready, you can move your attention and focus to a friend or someone you know who may be experiencing difficulties. You can, if you wish, focus on groups of people, such as “all my friends” or “all my family”.

When you feel able and ready you can also experiment with difficult people in your life. Try sending them kindness and maybe a wish that they might be happy, and with a gentle curiosity observe your inner response.

In doing loving-kindness for a person you find difficult, you are not allowing them to take advantage of you or hurt you, rather you are coming to see that they too are human beings who seek happiness and contentment and it may happen that this can change our relationship to the situation and help release resentment that we may hold.

Sitting here for a little longer with these feelings of loving kindness, for ourselves or for others. Remembering that when our minds wander we can always come back to our breath and remind ourselves of our intention to sit with kindness.

And in a few minutes when you hear the sound of the bells, as best as you can take this feeling of loving kindness, especially towards yourself, into the next moments of your day.

*Note - In doing Loving Kindness Meditation, we are likely to experience many different feelings, such as sadness, grief or anger. This is quite normal and it does not mean that we have made a mistake. It is common for deeply help feelings to be released as we practice loving kindness. This release can be very healing in itself. Simply observe the feelings, keep breathing, and continue with the practice.*