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**1: Introduction to Loving Kindness**

This series of guided meditations will introduce you to loving kindness meditation. Loving kindness is a kind of meditation practice. With it, you cultivate an attitude of kindness, friendliness and love towards yourself and others. Loving kindness meditation can create very pleasurable emotions in the body and can make you very happy.

At its best loving kindness is fun, pleasurable, enjoyable, and also extremely powerful. Loving kindness meditation can also present its own kinds of challenges. By the end of this series, you'll have learned the basics of loving kindness meditation. Let's do some practice now. At the beginning of every session, practice settling in with your body. Find a posture that's comfortable for your body right now. maybe it's sitting on a cushion or a chair, maybe it's lying down.

In any case, find a position that feels comfortable for you and your body, right now.

Having established yourself in this posture, enjoy the comfort that comes with this position.

Notice the weight of your body being supported by the chair, the cushion, or the ground. Notice the relief that comes with that.

These sensations of comfort might be small, but they're very significant. So see if you can notice them and enjoy them.

Having established a comfortable posture, see if you can relax your body. In meditation practice, relaxation is a technical term, meaning the relaxation of muscular tension in your body,

scan your body and see if you can find any muscular tension, perhaps there's tension in your jaw, or your shoulders, or your arms, or your hands, or your legs, or your feet.

See if there's tension in any part of your body.

If you notice tension anywhere in your body, see if you can invite that tension to relax, to loosen, to ease up.

This may or may not be possible. Certain parts of your body may not want to relax, but you can gently invite your body to relax.

To whatever extent you can relax your body, notice that, and really enjoy it. Enjoy the relaxation.

There's a kind of pleasure that comes with relaxation and it may be small, but it's very significant.

Take a moment to enjoy this configuration of your body in a comfortable posture and having relaxed your body enjoy settling in. Allowing your body to become comfortable and to relax is a form of loving kindness practice. You're loving yourself by taking care of your body. So it's important to begin loving kindness sessions with this practice of settling in your body, becoming comfortable and relaxed.

2: Smiling and Gratitude

Begin by settling in. Find a comfortable posture for your body. Whether it's sitting in a chair or a cushion, or maybe lying down.

Establish yourself in this comfortable posture, and enjoy that comfort.

Having found a comfortable posture for your body, invite your body to relax.

Look for any muscular tension that might be present in your body at this time. See if you can allow that tension to relax.

Again, take a moment to enjoy this relaxation.

Having established a comfortable, relaxed posture for your body. Invite a smile to your face.

It doesn't have to be a huge grin, but if it feels good, establish a gentle easy smile on your face.

When you bring a smile to your face, chemicals are released in your nervous system that incline you towards happiness. So with the simple act of smiling, you move towards happiness.

In this way, smiling prepares us for loving kindness practice.

See if you can maintain this gentle easy smile for the entire practice.

Notice what it feels like to smile.

If there's any enjoyment that comes with smiling, notice that and really enjoy it

again. The joy or happiness that comes with smiling might be small, but it's very significant. So become aware of it, and really enjoy it.

Having established this gentle easy smile on your face, take a moment to reflect on things in your life that you're grateful for..

These could be big things or small things you might feel grateful for having enough food to eat or for having a place to sleep, or maybe you feel grateful for your job or the friends and family members you have in your life.

It could be something totally ordinary that you're grateful for, or something very unique and special to you right now.

You might feel grateful for having clean air to breathe, or for having something fun to do later this week.

In any case, reflect on things in your life that you can feel grateful for. You can stay with feeling grateful for the same thing or reflect on many different things.

Consider what you are grateful for, in your life.

If reflecting on these things that you're grateful for brings you any enjoyment or happiness, notice that, and really enjoy it, savor it. Soak it up.

Taking a moment to smile, and to consider things that we're grateful for, is an excellent way to practice loving kindness.

3: Using Mental Talk

Begin by settling in. Take a moment to find a comfortable position for your body, whether it's sitting in a chair, cushion or lying down.

And in this comfortable posture, allow your body to relax.

If you notice that there's any muscular tension, see if you can gently invite it to relax.

If you'd like, you can invite a gentle, easy smile to your face.

It doesn't have to be a huge grin. It can just be a gentle, easy smile.

In this way, you're preparing the body for loving kindness practice, with a comfortable, relaxed position of your body, and a gentle, easy smile on your face.

Having done so, take a moment to consider something in your life that you're grateful for. It could be big or small. Just anything that you're grateful for.

By reflecting on the things in your life that you're grateful for, you're preparing your mind for loving kindness practice.

One way to cultivate an attitude of loving kindness is through mental talk, repeating various mental phrases.

Repeating these phrases can help you to perceive and kind and loving ways, and it can also cultivate feelings of love and happiness in your body.

It doesn't really matter what phrase you use so long as it resonates for you. You can say these phrases out loud or silently in your mind. And you can use the same phrase over and over again, or develop custom phrases each time that resonate for you.

It's important to find what works for you.

To start, let's say the same phrase over and over again. Think of someone you care about. Maybe a friend or family member. Having selected this person that you care about, say a phrase in your mind, like, may they be happy or I love you so much.

Pick one of those phrases that resonates for you or another one that you like and say the same phrase over and over again, every few seconds at a pace that feels good for you. I'll demonstrate now.

I love you so much.

I love you so much.

I love you so much.

I love you so much.

Practice saying the same phrase repeatedly every few seconds at a pace that feels good for you.

Be sure that you can hear the phrase every few seconds at a pace that feels good for you, whether you're saying the phrase out loud or in your mind.

May my friend be happy.

May my friend be happy.

May my friend be happy.

Again, it doesn't really matter so much what phrase you use. If you'd like you can try using a different phrase that feels more customized to this person and your relationship with them. Something like, "May my friend enjoy her day", or "May my mother sleep well tonight," or really any phrase that you like.

Feel free to experiment and be playful.

As you repeat these phrases, if there's any enjoyment, any happiness or joy that's brought into your emotional body, notice that and really enjoy it.

Continue to repeat your loving phrase for another moment.

4: Using Mental Images

Begin by settling in. Find a position that's comfortable for you and your body. Right now, maybe it's sitting down on a cushion or a chair. Maybe it's lying down.

In any case, find a position that feels comfortable for you, right now.

Notice if there's muscular tension present in your body, and allow yourself to relax.

Relax your body.

Having established a comfortable, relaxed position of your body, if you'd like you can invite a gentle easy smile to your face.

From here, take a moment to consider something in your life that you're grateful for.

It could be anything at all, big or small. Just take a moment to reflect on something that you're grateful for.

One way to cultivate an attitude of loving kindness is through the use of mental images, imagining images in your mind that make you happy.

Consider someone in your life that you care about. Maybe it's a friend or family member and visualize this person in your mind.

Maybe you remember a shared happy memory, or remember what they look like when they're smiling or laughing, or even imagine them in a made up situation where they're very happy.

It doesn't really matter so much what you visualize or imagine so long as the content is positive and it makes you happy.

Visualize this person being happy.

You can bring up the same image repeatedly and maintain it, seeing the same image every few seconds, or use many different images, imagining whole scenes, an elaborate story or plot about this person being happy.

The most important thing is that you visualize this person being happy in a way that makes you happy.

Use your mind's eye to visualize this person being happy.

If you'd like, you can stay with the same person or switch to someone new.

In any case, use your mind's eye to visualize people you care about being happy, smiling, or laughing or enjoying life.

Keep using your imagination to visualize this person being happy.

Notice what this process is like for you.

If there's any enjoyment or happiness in your emotional body, notice that, and really enjoy it.

Allow yourself to enjoy the happiness that comes with practicing loving kindness.

5: Noticing Emotional Body Sensations

So far, we've learned how to cultivate loving kindness through mental talk and mental images.

Practicing loving kindness with phrases and images can change the way you think and perceive, but it can also change how you feel emotionally: generating feelings of happiness or love. One of these may have been more effective than the other. Perhaps it was easier to generate loving kindness through images, or perhaps talk was more effective.

Both are valid options. You can use mental talk or mental images are both mental talk and mental images. Over time, you have to learn what works for you.

In this practice session, we'll practice using either mental talk or mental images to create feelings of happiness and love in the body.

Begin by settling in, find a position for your body that feels comfortable. Maybe it's sitting down in a chair or a cushion, and maybe it's lying down.

Choose a posture that feels good for you, right.

Having established yourself in a comfortable posture, allow your body to relax. Notice if there's any muscular tension that's present for you and your body at this time. And see if you could invite it to relax.

Enjoy this comfortable, relaxed position of your body.

If you'd like, you can invite a gentle, easy smile to your face.

From here, take a moment to consider something in your life that you're grateful for. Anything at all, something big or something, small, something very ordinary or very special.

Let's reflect on one or more things in your life that you're grateful for.

If there are any feelings of happiness in your body, notice those and really enjoy them.

Very good. Now, bring to mind someone that you love. Anyone at all, it could be a close friend or a family member, a child or a beloved mentor. Someone that you feel love for.

At this time, make a choice of whether you'd like to use mental images or mental talk to cultivate loving kindness.

If you're using mental images, you can bring up an image of this person being happy, perhaps laughing or smiling, or a memory that you shared together, where you were both happy, any image or a series of images will do.

Bring those images to mind and maintain them, bringing them up every few seconds, cultivating this attitude of loving kindness.

On the other hand, if you're using mental talk, repeat a phrase like, "May you be so happy" or "I love you," or any phrase that you like, directed towards this person.

You can say this phrase every few seconds, at a pace that feels good for you.

Whatever strategy you're using, you're using your mind to generate an attitude of loving kindness.

You might be using mental images, or you might be using mental talk, but you're cultivating the same kind of attitude of love and friendliness.

Continue to do that for another moment.

As you cultivate this attitude of loving kindness, notice what that feels like in your emotional body.

Emotions are typically present in your body, in your face or your throat or your chest or your stomach. See what those areas of your body feel like at this time.

If there's any sense of enjoyment or happiness, if there are pleasant emotions in your body, notice them and really enjoy them.

It's also possible that you're not feeling very much emotionally. If so, no problem. That's totally normal. Just keep using the phrases or images that you've been using, or try something new and different.

On the other hand, it's possible that you have difficult negative emotions in your body, like sadness or fear or anger. If so, that doesn't mean you're doing anything wrong. It's very common that these emotions arise when doing loving kindness practice. If it's overwhelming, you can take a pause and do something different.

Or if it's not too overwhelming, it's just a little uncomfortable, you can feel those emotions in your body without pushing them away, and continue to do loving kindness practice, knowing that the emotions will pass and change. You get to decide.

If at any time it becomes too difficult, feel free to take a break and do something different.

In any case, when you do loving kindness practice, be attuned to how your emotional body feels as you do the technique.

6: Love for an Easy to Love Person or Animal

Begin by settling in.

Allow yourself to become comfortable in your body by finding a position that feels comfortable for you, right now.

Having established a comfortable posture, notice if there's any muscular tension in your body,

if you find tension anywhere in your body. See if you can gently invite it to relax.

Relax your body.

And if you'd like, if it feels good for you, invite a gentle, easy smile to your face.

With this comfortable, relaxed position of your body, and a gentle, easy smile on your face, take a moment to consider something in your life that you're grateful for. Anything at all.

In loving kindness practice, it's helpful to have one or two people that are relatively easy for you to feel love for.

It could be a close friend or family member. It could be a beloved pet. It could be someone real in your life, or someone imaginary, maybe thinking about babies or puppies or kittens; cute animals of any kind.

It's helpful to have one or two easy to love persons or animals in mind for you to send loving kindness to. Think of someone like that, right now.

Bring this person or animal to mind, and begin to cultivate an attitude of loving kindness towards them.

You could use mental images, visualizing this person, remembering them or imagining them at a time when they were happy; or you could use a phrase, mental talk like, "may you be so happy."

It doesn't really matter how you do it.

You know best what works for you.

In any case, cultivate an attitude of loving kindness towards this easy to love person or animal.

For many people, just bringing to mind someone who you love very much can make you smile and feel happy: thinking of a dear friend or family member or a young child or pet in your life. If that's your experience, if there's enjoyment and happiness and love, just from thinking about this person and wishing them well, notice that and really enjoy it.

Allow yourself to delight in that love and happiness.

If you're not noticing a sense of love or happiness arising, no problem. You can keep trying to cultivate loving kindness in the same way that you've been doing or try something different, either a different approach, or directing loving kindness towards someone different.

But if you're not feeling much, it doesn't mean you're doing it wrong.

You're still practicing cultivating an attitude of loving kindness.

Continue to practice directing loving kindness towards this easy to love person or animal for another moment.

With enough practice and repetition, directing, loving kindness towards this easy to love person or animal simply thinking of this person or animal will bring you joy and happiness.

And so in this way, it's an excellent way to start loving kindness practice. I bringing to mind, you're easy to love person or animal

If the person or animal that you've selected doesn't resonate for you. That's no problem. You can always try someone else.

Let's stay attuned to what your response is, and if you do find that experience of delight and joy, happiness, and love for another person, remember that, so that you can go back there and direct, loving kindness towards your easy to love person or animal.

At the end of a meditation practice period. It's helpful to take a few moments to reflect on your experience.

What happened? What was it like for you? Did you learn anything new? Did you face any new challenges?

Reflecting on your experience allows you to integrate what you learned, even if it was a difficult experience. Take a moment to reflect on your experience.

7: Love for Self

Begin by settling in. Find a position of your body that feels comfortable for you, right now.

And from this comfortable position, allow your body to relax.

If you find muscular tension anywhere in your body, gently invite that tension to relax.

And if you'd like, if it feels good for you, bring a gentle, easy smile to your face.

With a comfortable, relaxed body, and a gentle easy smile on our face, we've prepared the body for loving kindness practice.

Now we can begin to prepare the mind for loving kindness practice.

Take a moment to consider something in your life that you're grateful for.

It could be anything at all, big or small, just something in your life that you're grateful for.

Loving kindness practice can be used to cultivate love for self, self-love, or self-compassion. For some people, this is really easy. It's easy for them to love themselves. But for other people, it can be really hard. Having some difficulty loving yourself is very normal. If that's your experience, it doesn't mean that you're doing it wrong, or that there's anything wrong with you.

If it feels too hard to practice loving kindness, and direct that love towards yourself, feel free to practice cultivating loving kindness for someone else. Maybe your easy to love person or animal. Or to do something else entirely: go for a walk, make a nice meal. You never have to do loving kindness practice, and you never have to practice directing love towards anyone in particular, including yourself.

But if it feels good, let's practice cultivating, loving kindness for yourself.

To begin, you can visualize yourself being happy, perhaps remembering a photograph of yourself on a happy occasion, or imagining yourself being happy in the future, perhaps smiling or laughing. Bring an image like that to mind.

If it feels good, you can stay with this image or many related images of yourself being happy, even imagining a whole scene in your mind; or if it's easier for you, you can use mental talk phrases to cultivate an attitude of love towards yourself.

You could say phrases like this in your mind. "I love myself so much."

"May I be so happy."

"May I feel safe and loved."

Or really any phrase that you like, that resonates for you, that makes you feel love towards yourself.

You get to decide how you practice loving kindness. In any case, cultivate an attitude of loving kindness towards yourself.

If there's any difficulty, if it feels difficult to cultivate an attitude of loving kindness for yourself, feel free to make a change and direct loving kindness towards someone else, or to do something different entirely.

On the other hand, if there's any enjoyment, if it feels good to cultivate love for yourself, really enjoy that, feel that love for yourself.

You deserve it.

Continue to practice in whatever way seems good to you for another moment.

Now take a moment to reflect on your practice period. What happened during it? What was it like for you? Were there any challenges? Did you learn anything new? Take a moment to consider, and reflect.

8: Love for a Neutral Person

Begin by settling in.

Find a position of your body that feels comfortable for you, right now, and allow your body to relax.

Enjoy this comfortable, relaxed position of your body for a moment.

And if you'd like, if it feels good for you, bring a gentle, easy smile to your face.

See if you can maintain this for the whole practice period : a comfortable relaxed body, with a gentle easy smile on your face.

Take a moment to consider something in your life that you're grateful for.

It could be anything at all, something big or something small.

Reflect on something that you feel grateful for.

So far, we've practiced cultivating love for an easy to love person and for yourself. Now, let's see if we can cultivate an attitude of loving kindness for someone neutral in your life. An acquaintance you don't know very well or at all, or aren't particularly close to, it could be someone like a clerk at a local grocery store or someone you passed on the street recently, or a coworker that you don't work very closely with.

Bring to mind someone neutral in your life, someone who you don't especially love or especially dislike, just someone neutral, an acquaintance of some kind.

Having picked such a person in your mind, take a moment to remember what they look like, visualize them in your mind's eye and imagine them being happy.

Perhaps being with their friends and family members, smiling and laughing, enjoying their life.

Even though you don't know them very well, this person has their own life with their own joys and challenges, and is also worthy of love in the same way that you and your easy to love person or animal are. See if you can visualize this neutral person being happy.

If you'd like, if it feels helpful, you can use mental talk in addition to, or instead of these mental images, perhaps using a phrase like, "May they be so happy."

"May they be so happy."

"May they be so happy."

Saying that phrase or another one like that at a rhythm that feels good for you.

It doesn't really matter how you cultivate this attitude of loving kindness: whether you use images or phrases in your mind, the attitude is the most important thing. Wishing them well, wanting them to be happy, seeing that they deserve to be happy in the same way that you do.

Continue to cultivate this attitude of loving kindness towards this neutral person for another.

Notice what this process feels like for you emotionally, and if there's any sense of happiness or love of any kind, notice that, and really enjoy it. Savor it and soak it up.

Even if it's small, this form of happiness is a very good one to enjoy. So really enjoy it.

Very good. Now take a moment to look back. What was this practice period like for you? Did you learn anything new? Were there any challenges, take a moment to reflect on your experience?

9: Love for a Difficult Person

Begin by settling in. Pick a position of your body that feels comfortable for you right now, and invite your body to relax.

Enjoy this comfort and relaxation for a moment.

If you would like, bring a gentle, easy smile to your face.

Take a moment to consider something in your life that you feel grateful for.

Loving kindness practice can be used to cultivate an attitude of love and friendliness for many people, including the difficult people in our life, whether it's someone that you find annoying or uncomfortable, or even someone who's hurt you.

There's a high challenge level to this, and it can be quite difficult. If it feels too hard to cultivate loving kindness for a difficult person, feel free to change who you're directing this loving kindness towards, or to do something else entirely.

But if it feels like an interesting challenge, consider someone in your life that's difficult for you. It doesn't have to be your worst enemy or a truly evil person. Just someone who's a little challenging for you. Maybe they're annoying or uncomfortable to be around. Or something has happened in your relationship with them recently, that's hurt a little bit.

Bring someone like that to mind.

Consider that even though this person is difficult for one reason or another, that your relationship is strained, or you may not even like them very much, they are also a living being that deserves love and deserves to be happy. And maybe even for yourself, that your relationship with them might be easier if they were happier.

That's a totally valid way to cultivate love for someone else.

Take a moment to reflect on that.

And with this attitude of well-wishing, wishing someone well, even though they're difficult for you, visualize them being happy: perhaps laughing or smiling or enjoying their life. Visualize what that looks like for this difficult person to be happy.

Let's see if you can really wish that for them: that they would be happy, that they might smile and laugh and enjoy their life. See if you can cultivate an attitude like that using mental images.

If it helps you can use a phrase like "May they be happy" or "May they enjoy their life" or "May they smile often." Any phrase that you like. It doesn't matter so much what you say, so long as it helps you cultivate this attitude of love and friendliness

Similarly, it doesn't matter so much whether you use images in your mind, or phrases that you can hear. Just finding some way to cultivate this attitude is the most important thing.

And as you cultivate this attitude of love towards this difficult person, notice what it feels like for you in your body. Is it difficult? Challenging? Uncomfortable?

If it is, you always have the option of stopping and taking a break or simply changing who you're directing loving kindness towards.

You might find it helpful to switch to your easy to love person or animal, and even come back once you're in an attitude of love and feeling good in your body.

But if it's very difficult, feel free to take a break and do something else. You never have to do loving kindness practice and you never have to direct loving kindness towards anyone in particular, even the difficult people in your life.

On the other hand, if there's enjoyment, if you find a sense of happiness and love is arising for you, notice that and really enjoy it.

This is a very wholesome and beneficial form of love, genuinely feeling love and affection, and well-wishing towards the difficult people in your life. So notice that and really enjoy it.

Continue to practice cultivating love for this difficult person for another moment.

Take a moment to look back on this practice, period. What was it like for you? Was it particularly challenging? Was there any enjoyment or new insights? Take a moment to reflect on your experience.

10: Love for All Beings

Begin by settling in. Allow your body to be comfortable by choosing a position that feels good for you, right now, and invite your body to relax, letting go of any muscular tension that might be present for you at this time.

Enjoy this comfort and relaxation for a moment.

If you'd like, if it feels good for you, bring a gentle, easy smile to your face.

Take a moment to reflect on something in your life that you feel grateful for. Anything at all.

In loving kindness practice, you can cultivate an attitude of love for all beings. All humans and all animals.

Every one, every being deserves the same kind of love that you give your easy to love person or animal, or that you would feel for yourself or a close friend or family member. We can practice seeing things this way and cultivating this attitude of love for all beings.

Imagine different beings in your mind's eye.

Imagine all of the humans, near and far. Visualize humanity in your mind's eye.

And visualize all of humanity being happy.

And visualize all of the animals, the dogs and the cats, lions and tigers and elephants. Giraffes and gorillas, pandas, and zebras.

All of the animals on the planet.

And wish that those animals might be happy.

And consider as well all of the plants, the trees and the bushes, the grasses, and the flowers, the moss, all of the plants on this planet, and wish them well, that they might be happy.

You can even extend this attitude of love and care to the insects and the bacteria on the planet, knowing that they also play a vital role. Wishing that they might be happy and live in harmony with us and the other beings on this planet.

If you'd like, as you cultivate this attitude of loving kindness, you can use a phrase like may all beings be happy or may everyone on the planet be happy.

You don't necessarily have to visualize all beings at the same time. That might be very difficult. Most important thing is to cultivate an attitude of loving kindness that extends to all living beings, that's unconditional.

And you can do that in any way that you like with images or phrases in your mind,

Continue to cultivate loving kindness for all beings.

As you cultivate this attitude of loving kindness, notice what your emotional body feels like, in your throat and your chest, your stomach.

And if there's any felt sense of love or happiness or care, notice that, and really enjoy it. Feel that love, feel that happiness

Ultimately this felt sense of love and care is what loving kindness practice is aimed at. So if that's present for you, notice it and really enjoy it.

By feeling that feeling of love and care in your body, and enjoying it, savoring it, those feelings of love and happiness can grow and spread in your body. They might even extend outside of your body.

Explore if that's possible for you at this time, feeling the love in your body, and letting it grow and spread.

This love in your heart can be like a flashlight in a dark room, spreading out, extending outwards Illuminating everything, spreading love towards all living beings.

Whatever your experience, continue to cultivate an attitude of loving kindness for all beings.

Very good. Now take a moment to look back on your experience. What was it like? Was it challenging? Was it enjoyable? Did you learn anything new? Consider what your experience was like. .