

Week Five: Just Like Me (male voice) (14 minutes)

00:03: So for this practice, it's helpful to have the eyes closed if that feels safe enough. Otherwise, allowing your eyes to be open with a soft, relaxed gaze. And beginning by finding a comfortable posture, as comfortable as you can, as that will help support this particular practice. And this practice will be working with creating a connection with another person. Starting to notice similarities and commonalities as opposed to the differences that often divide us. And to begin, allow yourself to take a slightly deeper inhale and a slightly deeper exhale. And with the exhale, softening through your body as much as is possible at this moment.

[45 second pause]

01:43: Now in your awareness, in your mind's eye. Allowing yourself to think of someone with whom you have a small bit of difficulty, so not somebody for whom there's a huge challenge. Just someone for whom there's a bit of difficulty between the two of you, or you find yourself struggling each time you try to relate. And as you recall this person, try to either have the image of this person or the felt sense of what it's like to be in their presence. And try to make it as vivid as you can, either the feeling or the image.

02:58: And as you do this, you may even notice that there are thoughts or stories that are starting to emerge around the difficulty or the challenge that you have with this person. And if those arise, just allowing them to be there in the background, but in the foreground of your attention, taking another moment or two to just have the image or the felt sense of this person, and now taking a slightly deeper inhale and a slightly deeper exhale to allow yourself to really connect with your body and your breath for a few moments.

04:00: And from this place of embodied presence. Allowing yourself to notice that this other person has a mind and a body just like you. So this person is just like me. And remembering that this person has feelings. They have thoughts. They have all of the ups and downs of body experience, pain, sense of ease, and well-being just like me. And seeing if you can sense this commonality. And even reflecting that this person has, at some point in their life, been frustrated, they've been sad, they've been hurt or confused, just like me.

[30 second pause]

05:47: This person has experienced physical and emotional pain and difficulty just like me. And you can also reflect that this person is doing the best that they know how. Even if the impact is difficult on other people. They are doing the best that they know just like me.

[30 second pause]

06:46: And remembering that this person wishes to be healthy, to have a sense of meaning and purpose, and also to belong just like me.

[1 minute pause]

07:17: So now take another slightly deeper inhale, slightly deeper exhale, connecting again with your body and your breath. And now we can try cultivating some goodwill towards this other person that's human just like me. So you might try offering a simple intention or a simple wish. I wish that this person has health and strength. I wish that they have support in their life. I wish for this person to find ease and joy in their life. And I wish this because this person is a fellow human being, just like me.

[1 minute pause]

09:15: So now try offering these simple wishes - and you can find your own if you'd like - or even just this sense of goodwill or well-wishing that you're offering to this other person.

[20 second pause]

09:59: Now, for a moment, you might even imagine that this person was looking back at you. And as they were looking back at you, they offered another simple phrase or wish and said, "Just as you are wishing for my health, for my sense of ease and joy, I too wish for your health, for your sense of ease and joy in your life." So you might even imagine that this person because they are a fellow human being, is also offering it back to you. And if that's too difficult, if that doesn't feel like it's accessible, then don't force it. You might just open to all of the goodwill that you've received from others, from friends, from your family of origin or your family of choice, even from strangers who offer a smile or hold a door for you, all of these ways that you've received kindness and goodwill in your own life, taking some time to take this in and seeing if you can really soak it in almost like a sponge taking in this kindness and this goodwill.

[1 minute pause]

12:02: And remembering that all of us, in the best way that we know how, are trying to find happiness, trying to find a life that includes ease and joy, even if the way we go about it doesn't have the intended effect. But we're all human, and we all have this basic need to be happy, to belong, and to have a sense of joy and ease.

[20 second pause]

12:49: So finally, taking a last moment or two to appreciate your willingness to try this practice, it's not an easy practice. You're reorienting your own mind and your own heart. You're finding that which is common, that which connects us, rather than that which divides us and creates separation. And this is a practice that takes patience, takes time to cultivate, and it also takes the wisdom to know perhaps when you need to take a break knowing that you can come back to this practice whenever you need it, or that you can change individuals, perhaps finding someone where there's less difficulty or less struggle to begin with. So now you can let this particular practice go and open your eyes if they were closed, or if your eyes were open, just gently looking around the room for a few moments.