

# Loving-Kindness Meditation

Based on a meditation by [Jon Kabat-Zinn](#) from [Mindful.org](#)

- 1. In a dignified sitting posture or lying down, whatever you prefer, bring your awareness to the breath** and the body as a whole. Breathe and rest here, establishing a relatively stable platform of moment-to-moment awareness, riding on the waves of the breath.
- 2. When you feel comfortable resting with the flow of your breathing, picture someone in your life who loves you, or who loved you unconditionally.** Evoking and giving yourself over to feeling the qualities of the selfless love and kindness they accord you, or accorded you, and the whole aura or field of their love for you—right here right now breathing with these feelings, bathing in them, resting in the warmth and radiance of their heartfelt embracing of you just as you are. Or drinking in the experience that you are unequivocally and unconditionally loved and accepted as you are—without having to be different, without having to be worthy of their love, without having to be particularly deserving.
- 3. Whenever you feel ready, see if you can become the source as well as the object of these same feelings.** In other words, take on these feelings for yourself as if they were your own rather than those of another. Lingering as best you can with the rhythmic beating of your own heart. Cradling in your own heart these feelings of love and acceptance and kindness for yourself beyond judgment of any kind. Just basking in feelings of loving kindness akin to the all-loving embrace of a mother for her child—Where you are simultaneously both the mother and the child. Resting here in these feelings as best you can, from moment to moment. Bathing in your own kind regard. Your own complete acceptance of yourself as you are right here in this very moment. Letting this feeling be self-sustaining, natural, in no way forced or coerced.
- 4. In resting here in this field of loving-kindness, this embrace of loving-kindness, you may find it useful to whisper to yourself the following phrases:** *May I be safe and protected and free from inner and outer harm. May I be happy and contented. May I be healthy and whole to whatever degree possible. May I experience ease of well-being.*
- 5. Gently at your own pace, over and over, inwardly whispering, inwardly hearing, feeling, sensing, affirming:** *May I be safe and protected and free from inner and outer harm. May I be happy and contented. May I be healthy and whole to whatever degree possible. May I experience ease of well-being.*
- 6. Once you have established a fairly stable field of loving-kindness** around yourself and have lingered here for a time in the feeling of being held and cradled and rocked in its embrace, you can intentionally expand the field of compassion.

**10. Expand the field of loving-kindness out from your own heart and your own body and your own being, in your mind's eye and in your heart, evoking for now the feeling or image of an individual, a person for whom you have great affection, someone you were close to emotionally.** Can you hold this person in your heart with the same quality of loving-kindness that you have been directing towards yourself? Holding them in your heart. Imagining them in your heart as best you can and wishing them well: *May she, he, they be safe and protected and free from inner and outer harm. May she, he, they be happy and contented. May she, he, they be healthy and whole to whatever degree possible. May she, he, they experience ease of well-being.*

**11. Whenever you're ready, you can invite into the field of the loving heart, those for whom your relationship is more neutral, or even people you don't know at all, or who you have only heard of secondhand friends of your friends for instance.** And again, cradling him, her, or them in your heart, wishing them well: *May she, he, or they be safe and protected and free from inner and outer harm. May she, he, or they be happy and contented. May she, he, or they be healthy and whole to whatever degree possible. May she, he, or they experience ease of well-being.*

**13. And from here, you can once again expand the field of awareness to include one or more individuals who are actually problematic for you in one way or another, with whom you share a difficult past, perhaps.** Who may have harmed you in one way or another who for whatever reason you consider to be more of an adversary or an obstacle than a friend. This does not mean that you are being asked to forgive them for what they may have done to hurt you, or to cause you or others harm. You are simply recognizing that they too are human beings, that they too have aspirations, that they too, in all likelihood, desire to be happy and safe. So, as best you can, and only to the degree that you feel ready for it, or at least open to experimenting with it, extending loving-kindness to them as well, for all the difficulties and problems lying between you: *May she, he, or they be safe and protected and free from inner and outer harm. May she, he, or they be happy and contented. May she, he or they be healthy and whole to whatever degree possible. May she, he or they experience ease of well-being.*

**16. In the spirit of the boundlessness of the heart and of love itself, we can expand the field of loving-kindness even further** to include our neighbors and neighborhood, our community, our state, our country, the entire world if you will. You can include your pets, all animal life, all plant life, all life, the entire biosphere, all sentient beings. You can also get very specific and include specific people, even political leaders in the field of your loving-kindness. Difficult as that may be if you differ strongly with them and find yourself judging them and even their basic humanity harshly. All the more reason for including them. Being human, they are worthy of loving-kindness and perhaps will respond to it by softening in ways your mind cannot possibly imagine. And perhaps the same goes for you as well.

You can also specifically include in the field of loving-kindness of those less fortunate than yourself who are exploited at work or at home. All those who are imprisoned justly or

unjustly. All those who are at the mercy of their enemies. All those who are hospitalized or sick or dying. All those who are caught up in chaos, who are living in fear, who are suffering in any way shape or form. Whatever brought them to this point in their lives, just as we do, they all want to experience ease of well-being rather than dis-ease and fragmentation, just as we do. They all want to be happy and contented. They all desire to be whole and healthy. They all desire to be safe and free from harm.

So we recognize this way in which we are all united in our common aspiration to be happy and not to suffer and we wish them well: *May all beings, near and far, be safe and protected and free from inner and outer harm. May all beings, near and far, be happy and contented. May all beings, near and far, be healthy and whole to whatever degree possible. May all beings, near and far, experience ease of well-being.*

**17. And it need not stop here.** Why not include the entire Earth in the field of loving-kindness? Why not embrace the very earth that is our home? That is an organism in its own right, that is in a sense one body, a body that can be thrown off balance by her own actions, conscious and unconscious, in ways that create huge threats to the life it nurtures and to the intelligences embedded within all aspects of that life, animal and plant and mineral that interacts so seamlessly in the natural world. And so we can expand the field of the loving heart even further the field of our loving kindness.

Once again, to include this time the planet as a whole and out beyond that the entirety of the universe in which our Earth is merely an atom and we, not even a quark.

*May our planet and the whole universe be safe and protected and free from inner and outer harm. May our planet and the whole universe be happy and contented. May this planet and the universe be healthy and whole. May our planet and the whole universe experience ease of well-being. May our planet and the whole universe be safe and protected and free from inner and outer harm. May our planet and the whole universe be happy and content. Make our planet and the whole universe be healthy and whole. May our planet and the whole universe experience ease of well-being.*

**18. So, in the final moments of the meditation, rest in the radiance and luminosity of your own intrinsic beauty, your own intrinsic love, your own intrinsic kindness.** Whether you are using words or not, at whatever level you choose or intuitively you are drawn to. Radiating loving-kindness inwardly and outwardly near and far. And as this formal period of practicing together comes to an end, with the sound of the bells, affirm inwardly that this practice can be nourished on a regular basis if you are drawn to keep it alive and vibrant.