

METTA LOVINGKINDNESS PRACTICE

Metta (translated as lovingkindness or loving friendliness) was first taught by the Buddha as an antidote to fear. It can also be an antidote to aversion, hatred or low self-esteem. We traditionally practice by repeating phrases which develop concentration and purification. In some traditions, we start with a forgiveness practice to help open the heart. It can also be helpful to bring to mind a person or animal one loves without question so as to have a felt, body experience of the mind/heart state of love before starting the phrases. The phrases can also be repeated without a feeling of love; over time the feeling develops naturally of its own accord. It helps us connect with the heart of gladness that is in each of us.

Metta is the first brahma-vihara, or abode of the gods. The second is karuna, or compassion, which is a natural response if beings are suffering. The third is mudita, or sympathetic joy, joy in others' joy. All are balanced by upekkha, or equanimity, a sense of knowing things are as they are, and will surely change. There are also phrases which one can use to practice these other three abodes.

One always begins with oneself, then offers the phrases to others in various systematic ways, described below. Offering metta before you begin your daily sit can help quiet and concentrate the mind. Offering metta at the end of a sit is an excellent way to recognize the effort you have made and share the blessings.

Metta is a practice of intention and letting go. Practice not expecting anything. Practice non-clinging to anything. We water the seed of what is actually in our heart--calm and great love—allowing it to flower.

Benefits of Loving-kindness

- 1) You will sleep easily.
- 2) You will wake easily.
- 3) You will have pleasant dreams.
- 4) People will love you.
- 5) Devas (celestial beings) and animals will love you.
- 6) Devas will protect you.
- 7) External dangers (poisons, weapons, and fire) will not harm you.
- 8) Your face will be radiant.
- 9) Your mind will be serene.
- 10) You will die unconfused.
- 11) You will be reborn in happy realms.

Forgiveness Practice

If by deed, thought or word, I have harmed someone, I ask their forgiveness.

I forgive myself for any harm I may have caused myself.

I forgive (or I willingly undertake the practice of forgiving) those who have harmed me.

Traditional Phrases

May I be free from enmity and danger

May I be free from mental suffering

May I be free from physical suffering

May I have ease of well being

Possible Modifications

May I be safe

May I have mental happiness

May I have physical happiness

May I be free from struggle

One can develop one's own phrases, or use a single word. It is recommended to have about four phrases or word one uses most of the time, so as to develop concentration. However, when specific situations are on our minds, we can develop phrases to help us calm and open our hearts for those situations.

By Way of Persons

May I...

My parents (living or dead)

Mentors/teachers

Loved ones

Neutral persons

Difficult persons

All Beings

By Way of Location

May I

All beings in this room

Neighborhood, Town

State, Country

Hemisphere, World

Universe

All Beings

By way of characteristics

Beings who walk, crawl, fly, swim

Live on land, in water, in air

Known and unknown

Born and yet-to-be born

A Prayer:

May suffering ones be suffering-free

And the fear-struck, fearless be.

May the grieving shed all grief,

And all beings find relief.

Sharing Merit:

May all beings share this merit which we have thus acquired, for the acquisition of all kinds of happiness.