

Metta (Loving Kindness) Meditation

Becoming Safely Embodied Handout

To do *metta practice* you'll need three or four benevolent phrases that invite a positive internal experience. The traditional *metta* phrases are:

May I be happy.
May I be at peace.
May I live with ease.
May I be free from suffering.

You may use these very phrases, or you may want to use a mantra, a chorus from a song, a repetitive movement, a simple centering prayer, a few nurturing affirmations of your own, or a structured prayer with prayer beads.

Some people find that these phrases don't quite fit for them. If that happens to you, choose a different set of phrases—a mantra, a simple centering prayer, a few nurturing affirmations, or a structured prayer with prayer beads.

I've found the most important thing is to choose a phrase or word that allows you to focus without getting entangled in the associations to the word.

If the phrase, "May I be happy" brings up too much commentary from the internal peanut gallery (about why you should never, ever be happy), then it's going to be too disturbing to sit with. That won't help to build a sense of quiet inside!

If you prefer, adopt phrases from other spiritual traditions or make up your own phrases.

Some people have chosen phrases like,
"May I be happy someday,"
"May I be calm,"
"May I be gentler with myself," or
"May I be free from self-harm?"

Once you have your phrases in mind, find a quiet space and sit in a comfortable position. Take a few long breaths. Relax. Softly focus your eyes on a spot in front of you, or close your eyes if that is more comfortable.

Begin saying one of the phrases you've selected—slowly, with intention. Say the first. Let that settle in.

Then say the next, or even repeat the first. Breathe deeply and let each settle in before moving on to the next.

Over and over, for as long a time as you like, repeat the phrases, allowing yourself to resonate with the qualities they describe, as well as your intention to become aligned with those qualities.

If your mind jumps to the opposite of what your phrase/intention invites, let go of the practice and come back to it at another time.

The next time, limit yourself to 1-5 minutes of practice. As it becomes more comfortable to stay with your intention, gradually increase the time.

Remember, there is no right way to do this. It's a practice to find the softest, easiest, most comfortable way to develop concentration. Don't push yourself if it doesn't feel right. Just try it again another time.

If, for whatever reason, you find you are beating yourself up, remember compassion! And focus on your desire to feel good (another kind of concentration practice) instead of feeling bad.