

LOVING KINDNESS (METTA) MEDITATION

Loving Kindness meditation or metta meditation is a simple practice of directing positive messages to yourself and to others. It is powerful technique with [scientifically-proven abilities](#) including decreasing chronic pain, PTSD, symptoms of mental illness including schizophrenia, as well increasing emotional well-being, compassion towards others and balancing the stress response.

How To Do It

Instructions Courtesy of <http://www.contemplativemind.org/> and Steven Smith.

Take a very comfortable posture. One of the aims in this meditation is to feel good, so make your posture relaxed and comfortable. Begin to focus around the solar plexus, your chest area, your “heart center”. Breathe in and out from that area, as if you are breathing from the heart center and as if all experience is happening from there. Anchor your mindfulness only on the sensations at your heart center.

Breathing in and out from the heart center, begin by generating this kind feeling toward yourself. Feel any areas of mental blockage or numbness, self-judgment, self-hatred. Then drop beneath that to the place where we care for ourselves, where we want strength and health and safety for ourselves.

Continuing to breathe in and out, use either these traditional phrases or ones you choose yourself. Say or think them several times.

May I be free from inner and outer harm and danger. May I be safe and protected.

May I be free of mental suffering or distress.

May I be happy.

May I be free of physical pain and suffering.

May I be healthy and strong.

May I be able to live in this world happily, peacefully, joyfully, with ease.

Next, move to a person who most invites the feeling of pure unconditional loving kindness, the love that does not depend on getting anything back. The first person is usually someone we consider a mentor, a benefactor, an elder. It might be a parent, grandparent, teacher, someone toward whom it takes no effort to feel respect and reverence, someone who immediately elicits the feeling of care. Repeat the phrases for this person: “May she be safe and protected....”

After feeling strong unconditional love for the benefactor, move to a person you regard as a dear friend and repeat the phrases again, breathing in and out of your heart center.

Now move to a neutral person, someone for whom you feel neither strong like nor dislike. As you repeat the phrases, allow yourself to feel tenderness, loving care for their welfare.

Now move to someone you have difficulty with—hostile feelings, resentments. Repeat the phrases for this person. If you have difficulty doing this, you can say before the phrases, “To the best of my ability I wish that you be....” If you begin to feel ill will toward this person, return to the benefactor and let the loving kindness arise again. Then return to this person.

Let the phrases spread through your whole body, mind, and heart.

After the difficult person, radiate loving kindness out to all beings. Stay in touch with the ember of warm, tender loving-kindness at the center of your being, and begin to visualize or engender a felt sense of all living beings. The traditional phrases are these:

May all beings be safe, happy, healthy, live joyously.....

May all living beings be safe, happy, healthy, live joyously.....

May all breathing beings be safe, happy, healthy, live joyously.....

May all individuals be safe, happy, healthy, live joyously.....

May all beings in existence be safe, happy, healthy, live joyously.....

Allow the phrases to be simply a conduit for the force of loving-kindness. Empower your imagination through the five phrases to touch the hearts of all forms of life in the universe, unconditionally and inclusively. Stay with all beings until you feel a personal sense of the profound interconnectedness of all creatures, all life.

Then you can move on to specific categories of beings:

All females of all species (or the feminine principle of the universe within us all).

All males of all species (or the masculine principle of the universe within us all).

All awakened ones.

All seekers.

All celestial beings.

All humans.

All animals and other beings in difficult places.

The two pairs and the triad above are three more ways of including every being in the universe.

Here is an alternative way to practice this meditation:

Begin with yourself. Calm the mind/heart and find the center of your being. Generate warm, gentle, loving feelings for yourself:

May I be safe from harm.

May I be happy just as I am.

May I be peaceful with whatever is happening.

May I be healthy and strong.

May I care for myself in this ever-changing world graciously, joyously.

From yourself, move out spaciously into your immediate surroundings. Include every living being within this circle:

May all beings in the air, on land, and in the water be safe, happy, healthy, and free from suffering.

Stay within your reach. As you feel your immediate surround fill with the power of loving kindness, move on, expanding the surround in concentric circles until you envelop the entire planet.

Expand your loving kindness until you are able to visualize Earth, spinning within the vast, mysterious universe. If you like, continue expanding the sense of your loving kindness, filling the endless emptiness of the universe.

May all living beings everywhere, on all planes of existence, known and unknown, be happy, be peaceful, be free from suffering.

COUNTING MEDITATION

This is particularly effective for those who are new or beginner to the practice of meditation or for anyone who struggles with focus.

1. Find a comfortable seat, with a straight spine and crossed-legs or in a chair with feet flat on the floor. Close the eyes. Relax the muscles in the face, beginning with the space between the eyebrows and moving to the cheek-bones, jaw and un-clenching the teeth.
2. Take three long, slow inhales and exhales through the nostrils, expanding the belly on the inhale and contracting the belly towards the spine on the exhale.
3. Begin counting in intervals of 7. Beginning with 1 to 7. When you reach 7, go back to 1 and begin again, this time, counting to 14. Continue in this pattern.
4. If your mind wanders and you lose track of where you are at, re-start the count again from 1 to 7.

MINDFULNESS MEDITATION

Mindfulness meditation is a Western adaptation of the traditional Vipassana practice (more on Vipassana here: <https://www.dhamma.org/en-US/about/qanda>) and is the practice of intentionally focusing on the present moment, accepting and non-judgmentally paying attention to the sensations, thoughts, and emotions that arise.

How To Do It

Instructions adapted from Karen Kissel Wegela, PhD
<https://www.psychologytoday.com/experts/karen-kissel-wegela-phd>

1. Find a comfortable seat, with a straight spine and crossed-legs or in a chair with feet flat on the floor.
2. Begin by just sitting in this posture for a few minutes in this environment. If your attention wanders away, just gently bring it back to your body and the environment. The key word here is "gently."

Your mind WILL wander; that's part of what you will notice with your mindfulness: minds wander. When you notice that yours has wandered, come back again to body and environment.

3. The second part of the practice is working with the breath. In this practice rest your attention lightly (yes, lightly) on the breath. Feel it as it comes into your body and as it goes out. There's no special way to breathe in this technique. Once again, we are interested in how we already are, not how we are if we manipulate our breath. If you find that you are, in fact, controlling your breath in some way, just let it be that way. It's a bit tricky to try to be natural on purpose, so don't get caught up in worrying about whether your breath is natural or not. Just let it be however it is.
4. Again, sit for a few minutes with the posture and the environment and with your breath. In and out. In and out. Sometimes this is quantified as 25% of your attention on your breath. The idea isn't to get it "right," but instead to give you an idea that you're not channeling all of your attention tightly onto your breath. The rest of your attention will naturally be on your body and the environment.
5. Finally, the last part of the practice is working with thoughts. As you sit practicing, you will notice that thoughts arise. Sometimes there are a great many thoughts, overlapping one over the next: memories, plans for the future, fantasies, snatches of jingles from TV commercials. There may seem to be no gaps at all in which you can catch a glimpse of your breath. That's not uncommon, especially if you're new to meditation. Just notice what happens.

When you notice that you have gotten so caught up in thoughts that you have forgotten that you're sitting in the room, just gently bring yourself back to the breath. You can mentally say "thinking" to yourself as a further reminder of what just happened. This labeling is not a judgment; it is a neutral observation: "Thinking has just occurred." I like to think of it as a kind of weather report: "Thinking has just been observed in the vicinity."

Begin by practicing for 10-15 minutes. Even 5 minutes of mindfulness meditation can have a beneficial effect on calming the mind and body. You can move your way up to 30-60 minutes as you become more comfortable with the practice. Take your time.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, remember that mindfulness meditation is about practicing being mindful of whatever happens. It is NOT about getting ourselves to stop thinking. Repeat: it is not about getting ourselves to stop thinking. It is easy to fall into believing that that is the goal. Many people have a mistaken idea that becoming blank is the goal of meditation. Perhaps it is in some approaches, but it's not

in mindfulness meditation. So once again: if you find you are thinking (and you will), include it in what you notice. Don't try to get rid of your thoughts. It won't work and it's the opposite of the spirit of the practice. We are trying to be with ourselves as we already are, not trying to change ourselves into some preconceived notion of how we ought to be instead.

There is also the practice of mindfulness during our daily activities: while eating, walking, and talking. For "daily life" meditation, the practice is to pay attention to what is going on in the present moment, to be aware of what is happening – and not living in "automatic mode". If you are speaking, that means paying attention to the words you speak, how you speak them, and to listen with presence and attention. If you are walking, that means being more aware of your body movements, your feet touching the ground, the sounds you are hearing and so on.

Your effort in seated practice supports your daily life practice, and vice-versa. They are both equally important.

WALKING MEDITATION (from www.insightmeditationcenter.org)

Walking meditation brings a number of benefits in addition to the cultivation of mindfulness. It can be a helpful way of building concentration, perhaps in support of sitting practice. When we are tired or sluggish, walking can be invigorating. The sensations of walking can be more compelling than the more subtle sensations of breathing while sitting. Walking can be quite helpful after a meal, upon waking from sleep, or after a long period of sitting meditation. At times of strong emotions or stress, walking meditation may be more relaxing than sitting. An added benefit is that, when done for extended times, walking meditation can build strength and stamina.

People have a variety of attitudes toward walking meditation. Some take to it easily and find it a delight. For many others, an appreciation of this form of meditation takes some time; it is an "acquired taste." Yet others see its benefits and do walking meditation even though they don't have much taste for it.

To do formal walking meditation, find a pathway about 30 to 40 feet long, and simply walk back and forth. When you come to the end of your path, come to a full stop, turn around, stop again, and then start again. Keep your eyes cast down without looking at anything in particular. Some people find it useful to keep the eyelids half closed.

We stress walking back and forth on a single path instead of wandering about because otherwise part of the mind would have to negotiate the path. A certain mental effort is required to, say, avoid a chair or step

over a rock. When you walk back and forth, pretty soon you know the route and the problem-solving part of the mind can be put to rest.

Walking in a circle is a technique that is sometimes used, but the disadvantage is that the continuity of a circle can conceal a wandering mind. Walking back and forth, the little interruption when you stop at the end of your path can help to catch your attention if it has wandered.

As you walk back and forth, find a pace that gives you a sense of ease. I generally advise walking more slowly than normal, but the pace can vary. Fast walking may bring a greater sense of ease when you are agitated. Or fast walking might be appropriate when you are sleepy. When the mind is calm and alert, slow walking may feel more natural. Your speed might change during a period of walking meditation. See if you can sense the pace that keeps you most intimate with and attentive to the physical experience of walking.

After you've found a pace of ease, let your attention settle into the body. I sometimes find it restful to think of letting my body take me for a walk.

Once you feel connected to the body, let your attention settle into your feet and lower legs. In sitting meditation, it is common to use the alternating sensations of breathing in and out as an "anchor" keeping us in the present. In walking meditation, the focus is on the alternating stepping of the feet.

With your attention in the legs and feet, feel the sensations of each step. Feel the legs and feet tense as you lift the leg. Feel the movement of the leg as it swings through the air. Feel the contact of the foot with the ground. There is no "right" experience. Just see how the experience feels to you. Whenever you notice that the mind has wandered, bring it back to the sensations of the feet walking. Getting a sense of the rhythm of the steps may help maintain a continuity of awareness.

As an aid to staying present, you can use a quiet mental label for your steps as you walk. The label might be "stepping, stepping" or "left, right." Labeling occupies the thinking mind with a rudimentary form of thought, so the mind is less likely to wander off. The labeling also points the mind towards what you want to observe. Noting "stepping" helps you to notice the feet. If after a while you notice that you are saying "right" for the left foot and "left" for the right foot, you know that your attention has wandered.

When walking more slowly, you might try breaking each step into phases and using the traditional labels "lifting, placing." For very slow walking, you can use the labels "lifting, moving, placing."

Try to dedicate your attention to the sensations of walking and let go of everything else. If powerful emotions or thoughts arise and call your attention away from the sensations of walking, it is often helpful to stop walking and attend to them. When they are no longer compelling, you can return to the walking meditation. You also might find that something beautiful or interesting catches your eye while walking. If

you can't let go of it, stop walking and do "looking" meditation. Continue walking when you have finished looking.

Some people find that their minds are more active or distractible during walking than during sitting meditation. This may be because walking is more active and the eyes are open. If so, don't be discouraged and don't think that walking is thus less useful. It may in fact be more useful to learn to practice with your more everyday mind. You can train your mind to be present any time you walk. Some people choose specific activities in their daily routines to practice walking meditation, such as walking down a hallway at home or at work, or from their car to their place of work.

In our daily lives, we spend more time walking than sitting quietly with our eyes closed. Walking meditation can serve as a powerful bridge between meditation practice and daily life, helping us be more present, mindful and concentrated in ordinary activities. It can reconnect us to a simplicity of being and the wakefulness that comes from it.