

Basic Metta Instructions

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When you practice Loving-Kindness meditation, you start by sending loving and kind thoughts to yourself. You remember times when you were happy. And when that happy feeling arises, it is a warm glowing feeling in the center of your chest. As soon as that feeling comes up, then you make a wish for your own happiness. "May I be happy, may my mind be peaceful and calm, may my mind be filled with joy."

Whatever wish you make for yourself, you need to feel that wish. You know what it feels like to be joyful. You know what it feels like to be peaceful and calm. Whatever wish you pick for yourself, you need to feel that wish, and take that wish and put it right in the middle of that warm glowing sensation. Now while you are doing this your mind is going to wander around. Your mind is going to begin to think about other things, and that's ok. Thoughts are not your enemy to fight with or push away. Whenever a thought distracts your mind away from the feeling of Loving-Kindness and making a wish for your own happiness, then simply let that thought go. Now, every time your mind has a thought in it, there is a very slight tension or tightness that arises in both your body and in your mind. So you need to relax. The easiest place to notice the tension, is the tension in your head. When you let go of the tension in your head, you'll feel kind of an openness and expansion, and then your mind becomes calm. Bring that mind back to the feeling of Loving-Kindness and making a wish for your own happiness. It doesn't matter how many times your mind goes away. Every time you notice that your mind is thinking about something, then simply let go of that thought. Relax, and gently come back to the feeling of being happy and making a wish for your own happiness. If, during this half hour sit your mind wanders away fifty times, and fifty times you notice it, and relax, and come back to the feeling of Loving-Kindness, that is a good meditation. It's an active meditation but it is a good meditation.

A bad meditation is noticing that that your mind has wandered away and you think it's so important that you have to keep thinking about it. There's no thought worth holding on and indulging in while you're doing the meditation. Let go of all of the thoughts. If it's a real important thought, and you want to remember it, then just mentally put a red tag on it to come up later.

While you're sitting in meditation, please do not move your body for any reason. Don't wiggle your toes, don't wiggle your fingers, don't scratch, don't rub, don't change your posture, don't rock back and forth. You can move as much as this candle holder, which is to say, don't move. While you're doing this, you'll notice that there will be some sensations that arise in your body. There can be a want to cough, an itchy itch in your throat. A want to sneeze. An itch. Heat. Vibration. Pain. Any of these things can come up into your body at any place. As soon as you notice that your attention has gone to that sensation, you will also notice, that, you have thoughts about that sensation. You don't like that sensation; you don't want it to bother you. And you'll have all kinds of thoughts about that. The first thing you need to do is recognize that you're thinking these thoughts and let go of the thoughts and relax. Now you'll notice that there is a tight mental fist wrapped around that sensation. That tight mental fist is aversion. "I don't like it. I don't want it to be there." Now the truth is, when a sensation arises in your body, it's there. That's real profound, isn't it? Any time you try to fight with the truth, any time you try to control the truth, any time you try to make the truth be the way you want it to be, that is the cause of suffering. So when a sensation arises, the truth is that it's there. And it's ok for it to be there. It has to be ok for it to be there because it's there. You don't fight with it. You don't try to control it. What you need to do is allow that sensation to be there by itself. Let go of that tight mental fist around it, and relax. Now bring that relaxed mind back to your object of meditation. The nature of these kind of sensations is they don't go away right away. So your mind is going to bounce back to it. So, you'll notice all of these thoughts: "Why does it have to bother me now? Why doesn't it just go away? Why can't it leave me alone?" Let go of the thoughts about the sensation. Allow the sensation to be

there. Relax. Gently redirect your attention back to the feeling of Loving-Kindness and making a wish for your own happiness. You'll be bouncing back and forth with this for a little while, and that's ok.

Now, this is a smiling meditation. Want you to smile with your lips; smile with your eyes even though your eyes are closed; smile with your mind; smile with your heart. Doesn't have to be a big smile. But the corners of your mouth are very important. There's been studies on this and they found out when the corners of your mouth go up, your mental state goes up. So put a little smile so the corners of your mouth will come up just a little bit.

After about ten minutes then you begin to send loving and kind thoughts to a spiritual friend. A spiritual friend is someone of the same sex and they are alive. That's the requirements for them. A spiritual friend is someone when you think of them and their good qualities, you really like them. You sincerely do wish them well. So you're sending loving and kind thoughts to yourself for the first ten minutes, and then: "As I wish myself happy, or I wish myself peaceful and calm." feel that wish "As I feel this peace and calm, I wish this feeling for you. May you be peaceful and calm." See your friend in your mind's eye.

Now for some people, visualizing a picture is very easy. For other people, when they visualize, they visualize with thoughts. They visualize with verbalization, and that's fine too. But when you see your friend, you want to see them smiling and happy in your mind. That can help remind you to be smiling and happy too. The more interest you have in staying with your friend, and radiating that Loving-Kindness to your friend, the more interest you have, the easier the meditation becomes. When you're sending loving and kind thoughts to your spiritual friend, see your spiritual friend right in the middle of your chest, right in the middle of that loving feeling, and give them a heart hug.

After every wish that you make, relax any slight tension or tightness in your mind, in your head.

Ok, so we'll sit for half a hour. The first ten minutes you send loving and kind thoughts to yourself, and the rest of the time send loving and kind thoughts to your spiritual friend. Now this is the same spiritual friend all the time, you don't jump from one person to another person to another person. If your mind starts to get a little bit sleepy or dull, take more interest in sending that loving and kind thoughts to your friend. It has to be sincere.