

# LOVING-KINDNESS MEDITATION

Difficulty: **MODERATE** | Frequency: **1X/DAY** | Duration: **15 MINS**



## WHY YOU SHOULD TRY IT

Practicing kindness is one of the most direct routes to happiness: Research suggests that kind people tend to be more satisfied with their relationships and with their lives in general. We all have a natural capacity for kindness, but sometimes we don't take steps to nurture and express this capacity as much as we could.

Loving-kindness meditation (sometimes called "metta" meditation) is a great way to cultivate our propensity for kindness. It involves mentally sending goodwill, kindness, and warmth towards others by silently repeating a series of mantras.

## TIME REQUIRED

15 minutes daily

## HOW TO DO IT

This exercise draws on a guided meditation created by researcher Emma Seppala, Science Director of Stanford University's [Center for Compassion and Altruism Research and Education](#).

We recommend listening to the audio of this guided meditation in the player below; you can read more about it on [Dr. Seppala's website](#). We have included a script of the meditation to help you follow it yourself or teach it to others.

### Body Position

Close your eyes. Sit comfortably with your feet flat on the floor and your spine straight. Relax your whole body. Keep your eyes closed throughout the whole visualization and bring your awareness inward. Without straining or concentrating, just relax and gently follow the instructions.

Take a deep breath in. And breathe out.

### Receiving Loving-Kindness

Keeping your eyes closed, think of a person close to you who loves you very much. It could be someone from the past or the present; someone still in life or who has passed; it could be a spiritual teacher or guide. Imagine that person standing on your right side, sending you their love. That person is sending you wishes for your safety, for your well-being and happiness. Feel the warm wishes and love coming from that person towards you.

Now bring to mind the same person or another person who cherishes you deeply. Imagine that person standing on your left side, sending you wishes for your wellness, for your health and happiness. Feel the kindness and warmth coming to you from that person.

Now imagine that you are surrounded on all sides by all the people who love you and have loved you. Picture all of your friends and loved

ones surrounding you. They are standing sending you wishes for your happiness, well-being, and health. Bask in the warm wishes and love coming from all sides. You are filled, and overflowing with warmth and love.

### **Sending Loving-Kindness to Loved Ones**

Now bring your awareness back to the person standing on your right side. Begin to send the love that you feel back to that person. You and this person are similar. Just like you, this person wishes to be happy. Send all your love and warm wishes to that person.

Repeat the following phrases, silently:

*May you live with ease, may you be happy, may you be free from pain.*

*May you live with ease, may you be happy, may you be free from pain.*

*May you live with ease, may you be happy, may you be free from pain.*

Now focus your awareness on the person standing on your left side. Begin to direct the love within you to that person. Send all your love and warmth to that person. That person and you are alike. Just like you, that person wishes to have a good life.

Repeat the following phrases, silently:

*Just as I wish to, may you be safe, may you be healthy, may you live with ease and happiness.*

*Just as I wish to, may you be safe, may you be healthy, may you live with ease and happiness.*

*Just as I wish to, may you be safe, may you be healthy, may you live with ease and happiness.*

Now picture another person that you love, perhaps a relative or a friend. This person, like you, wishes to have a happy life. Send warm wishes to that person.

Repeat the following phrases, silently:

*May your life be filled with happiness, health, and well-being.*

*May your life be filled with happiness, health, and well-being.*

*May your life be filled with happiness, health, and well-being.*

### **Sending Loving-Kindness to Neutral People**

Now think of an acquaintance, someone you don't know very well and toward whom you do not have any particular feeling. You and this person are alike in your wish to have a good life.

Send all your wishes for well-being to that person, repeating the following phrases, silently:

*Just as I wish to, may you also live with ease and happiness.*

*Just as I wish to, may you also live with ease and happiness.*

*Just as I wish to, may you also live with ease and happiness.*

Now bring to mind another acquaintance toward whom you feel neutral. It could be a neighbor, or a colleague, or someone else that you see around but do not know very well. Like you, this person wishes to experience joy and well-being in his or her life.

Send all your good wishes to that person, repeating the following phrases, silently:

*May you be happy, may you be healthy, may you be free from all pain.*

*May you be happy, may you be healthy, may you be free from all pain.*

*May you be happy, may you be healthy, may you be free from all pain.*

### **Sending Loving-Kindness to All Living Beings**

Now expand your awareness and picture the whole globe in front of you as a little ball.

Send warm wishes to all living beings on the globe, who, like you, want to be happy:

*Just as I wish to, may you live with ease, happiness, and good health.*

*Just as I wish to, may you live with ease, happiness, and good health.*

*Just as I wish to, may you live with ease, happiness, and good health.*

Take a deep breath in. And breathe out. And another deep breath in and let it go. Notice the state of your mind and how you feel after this meditation.

When you're ready, you may open your eyes.

## **EVIDENCE IT THAT WORKS**

Fredrickson, B. L., Cohn, M. A., Coffey, K. A., Pek, J., & Finkel, S. M. (2008). [Open hearts build lives: Positive emotions, induced through loving-kindness meditation, build consequential personal resources](#). *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 95, 1045-1062.

People who practiced loving-kindness meditation daily for seven weeks reported a steady increase in their daily experience of positive emotions, such as joy, gratitude, contentment, hope, and love. They also reported greater life satisfaction and lower depressive symptoms following the intervention, compared to when they started. People who were on a waitlist to learn the practice didn't report these benefits.

Other evidence for the effectiveness of this practice can be found on [Dr. Emma Seppala's website](#).

## **WHY IT WORKS**

Loving-kindness meditation increases happiness in part by making people feel more connected to others—to loved ones, acquaintances, and even strangers. Research suggests that when people practice loving-kindness meditation regularly, they start automatically reacting more positively to others—and their social interactions and close relationships become more satisfying. Loving-kindness meditation can also reduce people's focus on themselves—which can, in turn, lower symptoms of anxiety and depression.

## **SOURCES**

[Emma Seppala, Ph.D.](#), Stanford University

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This practice is part of [Greater Good in Action](#), a clearinghouse of the best research-tested methods for increasing happiness, resilience, kindness, and connection, created by the [Greater Good Science Center](#) at UC Berkeley and [HopeLab](#).

