

Step 1: Settling and Focusing the Mind

- * Relaxed upright posture
- * Cleansing breaths

Settling the mind

- * Breath awareness: silently counting breaths, labelling the breath (inhale/exhale), or focus on sensations of breathing. Connect with the quality of spaciousness in your breath - allow it to embrace whatever is present in the moment for you.
- * When your mind wanders, gently escort it back to the breath

Suggestions for assisting stability of attention:

- * Count breaths 1 to 5, then 1 to 6, etc, up to 1 to 10, then start again. If you get lost, start from the beginning again.
- * Open awareness: focus on the breath AND any sensation that is occurring in the moment - the soundscape, tactile sensations, colours/patterns on the back of your eyelids...

Step 2: Loving-kindness and Compassion for a Loved One

- * Relaxed upright posture
- * Cleansing breaths

Settling the mind

- * Breath awareness: silently counting breaths, labelling the breath (inhale/exhale), or focus on sensations of breathing. Connect with the quality of spaciousness in your breath - allow it to embrace whatever is present in the moment for you.
- * When your mind wanders, gently escort it back to the breath

Lovingkindness for a loved one:

- * Bring to mind a loved one, notice any feelings of tenderness, warmth, connectedness that arise in your body
- * Silently recite these phrases for your loved one:
 - May you be happy
 - May you be free from suffering
 - May you know peace and joy

Compassion for a loved one

- * Imagine your loved one in some situation of suffering
- * Silently recite these phrases for your loved one:
 - May you be free from suffering
 - May you be free from fear and sorrow
 - May you know peace and joy

Conclusion

- * Notice and embrace any feelings of tenderness or warm-heartedness that have arisen
- * Finish with breath awareness

Step 3a: Compassion for Oneself

- * Relaxed upright posture
- * Cleansing breaths

Settling the mind

- * Breath awareness: silently counting breaths, labelling the breath (inhale/exhale), or focus on sensations of breathing. Connect with the quality of spaciousness in your breath - allow it to embrace whatever is present in the moment for you.
- * When your mind wanders, gently escort it back to the breath

Loving-kindness and compassion for a loved one

- * Picture or get a felt sense of someone you love, notice any feelings of tenderness, warmth, connectedness that arise in your body
- * Silently recite these phrases for your loved one:
 - May you be free from suffering
 - May you be free from fear and sorrow
 - May you know peace and joy

Compassion for oneself

- * Imagine yourself as a child, notice any feelings of tenderness or warmth that arise
- * Imagine this child in some situation of suffering
- * Silently recite these phrases for this 'childhood you':
 - May you be free from suffering
 - May you be free from fear and sorrow
 - May you know peace and joy
- * Think of a current situation of suffering, notice and make room for the feelings and thoughts that arise
- * Contemplate what it would be like to respond to this suffering with nonjudgemental concern and tenderness, rather than self-judgement or self-pity.
- * Silently recite these phrases for yourself:
 - May I be free from suffering
 - May I be free from fear and sorrow
 - May I know peace and joy
- * Recall your compassionate image, imagine yourself in its presence

Conclusion

- * Notice and embrace any feelings of warmth, tenderness and caring for your own needs that have arisen
- * Finish with breath awareness

Step 3b: Lovingkindness for oneself

- * Relaxed upright posture
- * Cleansing breaths

Settling the mind

- * Breath awareness: silently counting breaths, labelling the breath (inhale/exhale), or focus on sensations of breathing. Connect with the quality of spaciousness in your breath - allow it to embrace whatever is present in the moment for you.
- * When your mind wanders, gently escort it back to the breath

Loving-kindness and compassion for a loved one

- * Picture or get a felt sense of someone you love, notice any feelings of tenderness, warmth, connectedness that arise in your body
- * Silently recite these phrases for your loved one:
 - May you be happy
 - May you be free from suffering
 - May you know peace and joy

Compassion for oneself

- * Think of a situation of suffering in your own life, notice and make room for the feelings and thoughts that arise
- * Contemplate what it would be like to respond to this suffering with nonjudgemental concern and tenderness, rather than self-judgement or self-pity.
- * Silently recite these phrases for yourself:
 - May I be free from suffering
 - May I be free from fear and sorrow
 - May I know peace and joy

Loving-kindness for oneself

- * Ask yourself the question: "in my heart of heart, what do I truly aspire towards?"
- * Acknowledge your own desire for genuine happiness
- * Silently recite these phrases for yourself:
 - May I be happy
 - May I know peace and joy

Being a friend unto your self

- * Appreciate a quality of your own
- * Remember a time when someone offered you unconditional love, was generously present for you. Contemplating offering this same degree of unconditional acceptance and presence for yourself.

Gratitude and rejoicing

- * Contemplate and rejoice in some of the good things you have been fortunate to receive in your life.
- * Finish with breath awareness

Step 4: Common Humanity

- * Relaxed upright posture
- * Cleansing breaths

Settling the mind

- * Breath awareness: silently counting breaths, labelling the breath (inhale/exhale), or focus on sensations of breathing. Connect with the quality of spaciousness in your breath - allow it to embrace whatever is present in the moment for you.
- * When your mind wanders, gently escort it back to the breath

Compassion for oneself

- * Bring to mind a compassionate image and imagine yourself in its presence. Rest in unconditional compassion.

Shared common aspiration for happiness and freedom from suffering

- * For each of:
 - loved one,
 - stranger,
 - 'difficult' person

“Just like me, this person knows what it is to suffer - pain, loss, fear, disappointment, anxiety...”

“Just like me, this person wishes to be happy and free from suffering, and sometimes goes about this pursuit in all the wrong ways”.

Interconnection with and appreciation of others

- * contemplate the many ways your life is intertwined with the lives of others, and the countless other people whom you depend upon for your survival and wellbeing

Conclusion

- * Notice and embrace any feelings of connection with others that have arisen.
- * Finish with breath awareness

Step 5: Broadening compassion

- * Relaxed upright posture
- * Cleansing breaths

Settling the mind

- * Breath awareness: Silently counting breaths, labelling the breath (inhale/exhale), or focus on sensations of breathing. Connect with the quality of spaciousness in your breath - allow it to embrace whatever is present in the moment for you. When your mind wanders, gently escort it back to the breath.

Loving-kindness and compassion for oneself

- * Think of a situation of suffering in your own life, notice and make room for the feelings and thoughts that arise
- * Acknowledge your own desire for genuine happiness
- * Silently recite these phrases for yourself:
 - May I be happy
 - May I be free from suffering
 - May I know peace and joy

Compassion toward others

- * For each of:

- loved one,
- stranger,
- 'difficult' person

contemplate the following thoughts:

"Just like me, this person knows what it is to suffer - pain, loss, fear, rejection, anxiety..."

"Just like me, this person wishes to be happy and free from suffering, and just like me this person sometimes goes about pursuing these things in all the wrong ways".

and silently recite the following phrases:

May you be free from suffering
May you be free from fear and sorrow
May you know peace and joy

- * Imagine those three people together in front of you, and acknowledge the essential similarities between them:

"Just like me, these three people all .."

May you all be free...

Compassion for all beings

- * Expand your awareness from these three people to all those in your immediate vicinity, your town, your state, your country, the whole world..

"Just like me, all beings wish to be happy and free from suffering".

and silently recite the following phrases:

May all beings be free from suffering
May all beings be free from fear and sorrow
May all beings know peace and joy

Conclusion

- * Embrace any feelings of peace, happiness and compassion that have arisen
- * Dedicate your effort to the peace and wellbeing of all beings, including yourself.

Step 6: Active compassion

- * Relaxed upright posture
- * Cleansing breaths

Settling the mind

- * Breath awareness: Silently counting breaths, labelling the breath (inhale/exhale), or focus on sensations of breathing. Connect with the quality of spaciousness in your breath - allow it to embrace whatever is present in the moment for you.
- * Particularly notice the effortless transformation that occurs in your body as you breathe in cooler air, and breathe out warm air. When your mind wanders, gently escort it back to the breath

Active compassion for a loved one

- * Bring to mind a loved one, a situation of suffering.
- * Let a compassionate wish naturally unfold in your heart
- * Imagine their suffering as a dark, black cloud - imagine breathing it in to your own heart. In contact with the warmth and courage of your own heart it is effortlessly transformed. Breathe out comfort and healing - visualise it e.g. as a warm light.
- * Silently recite the following phrases for you loved one:
 - May you be free from suffering
 - May you be free from fear and sorrow
 - May you know peace and joy

- * Repeat these steps for:

those in the immediate vicinity

all beings

*Imagine the field of kindness in your heart as boundless and immeasurable, able to take in the pain and suffering of all beings; trusting that you are neither weakened nor contaminated by the process, as it calls forth your best intentions and inner goodness.

* Notice as you do this that you are transforming 7 billion strangers into brothers and sisters; knowing each other on some very deep level - sharing the capacity to suffer, the desire to be happy, and the network of relationships on which we all depend for comfort, joy, survival.

Conclusion

- * Notice and embrace any feelings of peace, happiness and interconnectedness that have arisen.
- * Dedicate your effort to the peace and wellbeing of all beings, including yourself.

Step 7: Integrated compassion practice

- * Relaxed upright posture
- * Cleansing breaths

Settling the mind

- * Breath awareness: silently counting breaths, labelling the breath (inhale/exhale), or focus on sensations of breathing. Connect with the quality of spaciousness in your breath - allow it to embrace whatever is present in the moment for you.
- * When your mind wanders, gently escort it back to the breath

Loving-kindness and Compassion for oneself

- * Bring to mind a compassionate image - imagine yourself in the presence of this image
- * Bring to mind an aspect of your own suffering - notice what feelings and thoughts come up.
- * Make room with your breath for those feelings and thoughts
- * Silently recite these phrases for yourself:
 - May I be happy
 - May I be free from suffering
 - May I know peace and joy

Loving-kindness and Compassion for a loved one

- * Bring to mind a loved one - notice what feelings come up
- * Rejoice in the ability of your heart to be pierced by another
- * Bring to mind a situation of suffering for your loved one - notice what feelings and thoughts come up. Make room with your breath for those feelings and thoughts
- * Silently recite these phrases for your loved one:
 - May you be happy
 - May you be free from suffering
 - May you know peace and joy

Lovingkindness and compassion for a difficult person

- * Bring to mind a 'difficult' person - notice and make room for any feelings that come up
- * Contemplate the following thought:
"just like me, this person wants to be happy, and just like me they sometimes go about getting it in all the wrong ways".
- * Experiment with silently offering the phrases for your 'difficult' person:
 - May you be happy
 - May you be free from suffering
 - May you know peace and joy

exploring in your heart the possibility of fully embracing this wish, and see if any feelings of tenderness arise where formerly there was hardness.

Lovingkindness and compassion for all beings

- * Extend your field of awareness to all beings - trusting that the field of kindness in your heart can be boundless.
- * Imagine the suffering of all beings as a dark, black cloud - imagine breathing it in to your own heart. In contact with the warmth and courage of your own heart it is effortlessly transformed. Breathe out comfort and healing - visualise it e.g. as a warm light.
- * Notice as you do this that you are transforming 7 billion strangers into brothers and sisters; knowing each other on some very deep level - sharing the capacity to suffer, the desire to be happy, and the network of relationships on which we all depend for comfort, joy, survival.

Conclusion

- * Notice and embrace any feelings of peace, happiness and interconnectedness that have arisen.
- * Dedicate your effort to the peace and wellbeing of all beings, including yourself.