Loving-Kindness Meditation Script

Mindfulness: Building Warmth Toward Yourself and Others

Loving-kindness meditation is a practice of sending kind wishes to yourself and then to other people, one person at a time. It comes from the Buddhist practice of metta, and meditation teacher Sharon Salzberg helped bring it to the West. This script guides you through a practice of about ten minutes. You can read it slowly to yourself, record it in your own voice, or ask someone to read it to you.

1 Before you start

- Sit in a comfortable position, or lie down if that feels better. Close your eyes or rest your gaze on the floor.
- The script uses four wishes: *May I be safe. May I be happy. May I be healthy. May I live with ease.* Change any that do not fit you.
- Say the wishes silently and slowly. You do not need to feel anything special.
- Your mind will wander. When it does, notice where it went and gently come back to the words.

Choose your people first. Someone I care about:

Someone neutral:

Someone a little difficult:

Why does this work? *Repeating kind wishes builds warmth the way repeated exercise builds a muscle. In a study by psychologist Barbara Fredrickson, people who practiced loving-kindness for seven weeks felt more positive emotions in daily life. In another study, a few minutes of practice made people feel more connected to strangers.*

2 The script: you and someone you love

1. Settle in (about 1 minute). Take a few slow breaths. Notice where your body touches the chair or the floor, and let your shoulders soften.

2. Start with yourself (about 2 minutes). Rest a hand on your heart if you like. Silently repeat: *May I be safe. May I be happy. May I be healthy. May I live with ease.* Go slowly, and repeat the wishes a few times. If this feels hard, start with step 3 and come back to yourself at the end.

3. Someone you care about (about 2 minutes). Picture a person or a pet who makes you smile easily. Imagine them in front of you and offer them the same wishes: *May you be safe. May you be happy. May you be healthy. May you live with ease.*

**This worksheet provides information but is not a substitute for therapy. It works best with guidance from a professional.*

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3 The script: widening the circle

4. Someone neutral (about 2 minutes). Think of someone you see often but do not know well, like a neighbor or a cashier. Remember that they want to be happy too, and offer them the four wishes.

5. Someone difficult (1 to 2 minutes). Choose someone who has mildly annoyed you. Start small, and leave the people who have hurt you most for much later. Offer them the wishes as best you can.

6. Everyone (about 1 minute). Let your wishes spread to your home, your town, and every living being: *May all beings be safe. May all beings be happy. May all beings be healthy. May all beings live with ease.*

7. Close (about 1 minute). Come back to your breath for a few moments. Notice how you feel right now, then slowly open your eyes.

Short on time? Steps 1, 2, 3 and 6 make a practice of about six minutes.

4 After you practice

My wishes in my own words:

Example: May I be gentle with myself today.

Which step felt easiest, and which felt hardest? What did you notice in your body or mood?

It is common to feel nothing at first, or to feel sad when you wish yourself well. Both are normal and often ease with practice. If the practice stirs up strong feelings that stay with you, a therapist can help you work through them.

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