

## **Cultivating a Friendly Mind 2.0**


Unitarian Universalist Church of Concord NH

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### **Week One: Why Choose Kindness?**

**View:** Human beings don't see the world "objectively." Our view of the world is limited by our sensory and mental capabilities, and is constrained by our experience, especially very early developmental experience of how our caregivers responded to us, how safe the world seemed and what we felt we could expect from it. Subsequent life experience layers on and further constrains our view. Almost all of this is operating unconsciously and is a lens through which we interpret what we see, what's going on with others, and what is possible for us individually.




**Intentional Positivity:** The Brahma Viharas, 4 practices from the Buddhist tradition, are 4 beneficial mind states that describe optimal views to bring to our experience of ourselves and our interactions with others. Since we have no choice about having our experience be mediated by a view, let's choose one informed by what we have learned—intellectually and in our felt experience—to be most optimal for the flourishing of ourselves and others.

The more we practice cultivating these beautiful mind states, the more they become one of the options that our body/mind can choose from when responding to the moments of our lives. And the good news is that once we are deeply familiar with these states, our body/mind will choose them automatically because they feel better! None of this negates our capacity to establish boundaries, to protect ourselves, and to take action to resist, protest or oppose wrongdoing in the world. We can still do these things, even more fully and courageously, while still maintaining the view of the humanity of all concerned.

**Formal Practice: Grounding in a Field of Care**, Link to audio:

Sit comfortably.

3 options for beginning: recall a single incident of receiving care, mind a caring figure from your own life, or imagine a caring



or bring to figure.

Allow yourself to richly recall/imagine the experience of this event, or being in the presence of this figure. It's not necessary to visualize; just in whatever way you naturally imagine, what's central is to FEEL yourself in this situation.

Repeatedly let yourself steep in the feelings of acceptance, of tenderness, of safety.

Allow whatever arises—distractions, judgements, difficult feelings—to also be held in this field of care, this no-judgement zone.

When necessary, re-visit the original image and refresh the feeling of the field of care.

### **Informal Practice:**

—Look for moments of care, of kindness as you go through your day. They can be small—someone holding a door open, offering a smile or cup of tea, letting someone enter traffic.

—Before going to sleep, review your day and identify 3 moments: a moment in which someone offered you kindness, a moment in which you offered someone kindness, and an caring interaction between others that you observed.