

Cultivating a Friendly Mind 2.0

Unitarian Universalist Church of Concord NH

Winter/Spring 2024

Contact: Jeanne Ann Whittington jawhittington3@gmail.com 603-724-3903

Home Practice, Week Three: Steeping the Mind in Kindness (Metta)

Metta 2: Phrases and Categories—the focus of this meditation is the mind state of Metta, elaborated by the meaning of the phrases, and the person you are radiating the phrases to.

Phrases:

May you be safe.

May you be happy.

May you be healthy/free from physical suffering.

May you live with ease.

(Over time you may find phrases that work optimally for you, but it's good to start simply with these traditional phrases.)

Categories of Beings: (phrases modified slightly when necessary)

Easy Person

Self (May I be safe...)

Friend (for whom things are going OK)

Neutral person

Difficult person (mildly difficult)

All Beings (May all beings be safe, or May we all be safe...)

Formal practice: (With recording or on your own. To practice on your own, have a list of the phrases and categories in front of you, so you can briefly open your eyes to refresh your memory. It won't be long until you memorize them.)

Sit comfortably. Bring up the mind state of Metta—always cool, always kind. Friendly, open, curious. Not wanting anything for yourself, just wishing well.

Choose an Easy person, and begin to offer your good wishes to them by silently repeating the four phrases.

Offer the phrases at a relaxed pace that allows you to sustain your attention on the meaning, the view of Metta, and your intention to offer kindness to the person you've chosen. How much time you spend on each category of Being depends on how much time you have for your practice.

For "All Beings," feel into the body and soften your skin, your sense of boundaries, especially on your back and sides. Allow your intention to radiate in all directions equally.

Watch out for the temptation to get lost in stories about the Beings you're choosing to work with. When you notice the attention wandering, just re-establish the mind state of Metta and begin offering the phrases again.

Close by letting go of phrases, resting in open awareness or mindfulness of body & breath.

Formal practice: Practice daily with the recording, or feel free to guide yourself. After spending a week focusing on this Metta 2 practice, spend the next 2 weeks (leading up to our next class) alternating between the two Metta practices—alternating either daily, or every few days, or doing each for a week at a time—to deepen your familiarity with each.

Informal practices: Metta is the antidote to anger and ill-will. In your daily life, if you find yourself caught up in anger and have a few moments, pause. Bring to mind an Easy Person (this is why we want a short list of them.) Simply reflect on them, or take a few moments offering them Metta through just one or more phrases. This can be enough to interrupt the momentum of the angry mind state.

As you move through your day, remind yourself to cultivate a habitual view of friendliness by offering a single silent Metta phrase, or even a single word, to people as you pass them on the sidewalk, or in your car as you're driving. Notice how it shifts your sense of relationship with strangers to view them through the lens of Metta.