

# Equanimity Meditation

## Mindfulness Worksheet

Date / Time:

What have you brought mindful awareness to today? Check all that apply.

Heart

Mind

Body

Breath

Environment

To begin this Meditation, please bring kind awareness to

- why you chose this topic
- how your belly, chest, and head each feel when you reflect on this topic
- the emotions that you can associate with these visceral feelings
- the positive or negative impact of any stories you believe in regarding this topic
- the fact that many others are feeling similarly about this topic as you
- how you might feel with increased awareness around this topic
- when you can apply increased mindfulness to this topic in your day-to-day life



### PURPOSE / EFFECTS:

The cause of much of our upset and emotional instability is clinging and neediness around people we like, and aversion and negativity towards people we don't like. We also have an unhealthy indifference to strangers, who may need our help, or at least our good will.

This equanimity meditation helps us to examine our feelings towards people, and correct them where they are mistaken. This leads to a more balanced, wholesome, and helpful viewpoint. It also cuts off a lot of emotional turmoil at its root.

### METHOD:

#### Summary

Meditate on three people (a loved one, an enemy, and a neutral person), examining and correcting your feelings toward them.

#### Long Version

- Sit in a comfortable meditation posture. Follow your breath until you feel centered and grounded.

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- Bring to mind the images of three people: someone you like, someone you dislike, and someone towards whom you feel indifferent. Keep these three people in mind throughout the meditation.
- Focus on the friend, and look into all the reasons you like this person. Try to see if any of the reasons are about things this person does for you, or ways they uplift your ego. Ask yourself if these are really the correct reasons to like someone. Then do the same thing with the person you dislike, instead asking about the reasons you dislike them. Finally, do this for the person you are indifferent towards, asking about the reasons for your indifference. In all cases, notice where your ego is involved in the judgment of the other person's worth.
- Next, ask yourself whether you consider each of these relationships as permanent. Would you still like your friend if they did something terrible to you? What if the person you dislike really did something nice for you? What if the stranger became close to you? Think about all the relationships in the past in which your feelings about the person have dramatically changed.
- Now, visualize the person you like doing something you dislike or that is unacceptable to you. Would you still be their friend? Remember that many people have changed from friends to enemies in the past. There are people who you used to like, toward whom you now feel equanimity. Think about how there is no special reason to feel good about a person who is only temporarily your friend.
- Next, visualize your enemy doing something very kind for you. They might visit you in the hospital, or help you to fix your home. When you imagine this, can you feel positive emotions toward this person? Can you remember times in the past when an enemy became a friend? Is it necessary to feel that your strong dislike for this person will last forever? Isn't it possible that they could someday become your friend?
- Now visualize the stranger. How would you feel about them if they did something very kind for you? Isn't it the case that all your current friends were at one point total strangers? Isn't it possible that a stranger could become your best friend? It has happened before.
- Think carefully about how everyone deserves equal regard as human beings. You must discriminate and make decisions based on your knowledge of a person's character, but you do not have to hold strong feelings or judgments towards them. It is very likely that your emotions around a person will change many times, so why hold onto these emotions so rigidly?

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### HISTORY:

In Buddhism, equanimity means a very deep, even profound, state of mental balance and stability. It is considered one of the seven factors of enlightenment, and a hallmark of the third and fourth jhanas, which are deep states of meditative absorption.

This is a traditional meditation from Mahayana Buddhism. Its goal is to arouse “bodhicitta” or the mind of enlightenment. There are other equanimity meditations from other Buddhist lineages (e.g., Theravadan), as well as from other contemplative traditions.

The version presented here is adapted from the book **How to Meditate: A Practical Guide**.

### CAUTIONS:

It can be upsetting to bring an “enemy” to mind.

### NOTES:

When working with the mental image of an enemy, be careful not to get lost in negative thoughts and feelings. If you find that you can't handle working with a specific person without getting very worked up, switch to someone less upsetting.