

MINDFULNESS MEDITATION

# STUDENT WORKBOOK

SESSION 5



**LOVING-KINDNESS**  
*and*  
**COMPASSION**

This week, following Session 5, we develop practices for self-compassion, empathy, loving kindness, patience, and open awareness. Our ability to offer loving kindness takes practice and intention, often and most especially toward ourselves.

The following exercises, meditations, and journal topics will give you something to focus on each day between sessions. Feel free to complete them in any order you like, and even to repeat any exercise you find helpful or interesting. Let yourself be led by your needs and interests this week.

## **Session 5 Contents:**

- Journal Topics
- Compassionately Questioning Negative Thoughts
- Seeing Yourself with Loving Eyes
- Self-Compassion Break
- Taking in the Good
- Cultivating Compassion
- Loving-Kindness Meditation
- Meeting Mindfulness with Kindness
- Evaluating Your Self-Punishment
- Letter of Self-Compassion

## Session 4 Journal Topics:

1. Write about the last time you received kindness, whether in words, actions, or thoughts. Who offered you kindness? How did you receive it? How did it change you?
2. Reflect on the last time you offered kindness to another. Why did they need it? What did it take for you to offer it? How did it affect the other person?
3. How was kindness given and received in your family of origin? Write about your earliest expectations of kindness, how you were taught to offer and respond to kindness.
4. Reflect on what it feels like to offer loving kindness to yourself. Is this a new experience for you? What's comfortable and uncomfortable about it? What parts of this practice will you develop with intention going forward?

# Compassionately Questioning Negative Thoughts

Date / Time:

So far today, have you brought kind awareness to your:

Thoughts?  Heart?  Body?  None

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



Most of us can understand the hold of a negative thought stream. When we're caught up in one of these thinking patterns, breaking it can be a great challenge. Learning to compassionately and curiously intervene with these thoughts can shift our mindset overtime, giving us greater control over the thoughts that stay with us.

Examples of negative thinking includes:

- "I never get it right."
- "Things are just so unfair."
- "I will never be good enough."
- "How could I have been so stupid?"

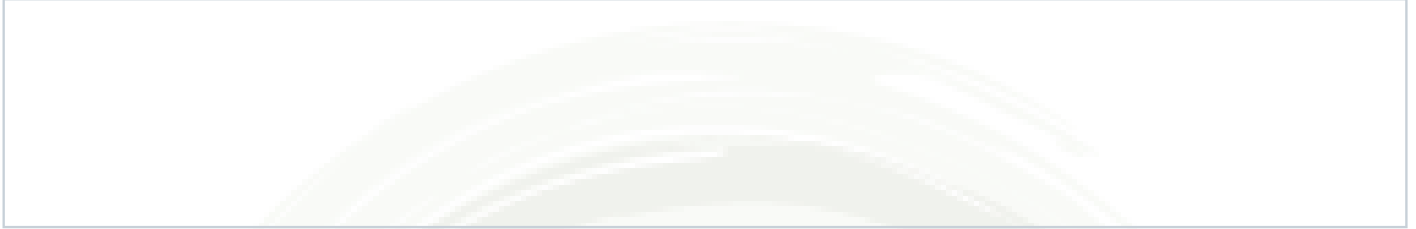
These sorts of thoughts are neither kind nor accurate. They fail to encompass the full picture of any scenario and they are often exaggerated responses to some event. Furthermore, they are often habitual, developed over years of conditioning. By bringing them to our awareness, it becomes possible to compassionately and mindfully shift them.

To gently interrupt and transform these patterns of thought, we are invited to compassionately and curiously explore what moves through the mind to assess its accuracy. And, where possible, we are then encouraged to replace it with a neutral or positive thought.

# Compassionately Questioning Negative Thoughts

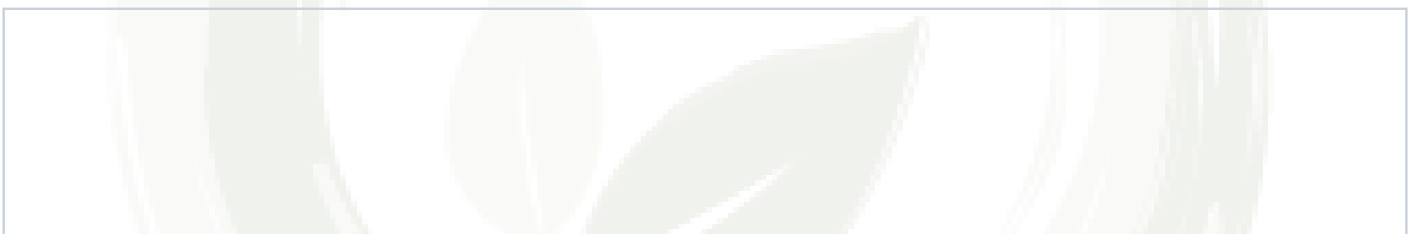
## PRACTICE:

1. When a negative thought arises (often accompanied by a low or anxious mood), note what the story is that is replaying in your mind. What is the narrative you are telling yourself?



2. With patience, openness, and compassion, begin a deeper inquiry into the thought:

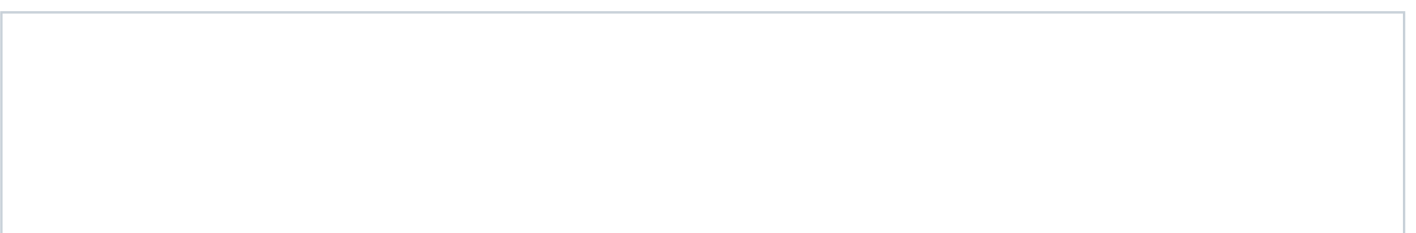
- What is supporting this belief I am carrying?
- Is there evidence that supports a contrary belief that I am overlooking?
- What conclusions am I making?
- What limited beliefs play into the conclusions I make?
- Do I know that this thought or belief is true?



3. Consider another thought or belief that could also be valid – and that might invite a new way forward. For instance, if the original negative thought was, “I will never be understood by him,” you might welcome a thought like: “My perception is that I am not presently being understood my partner. How might I communicate this differently?”

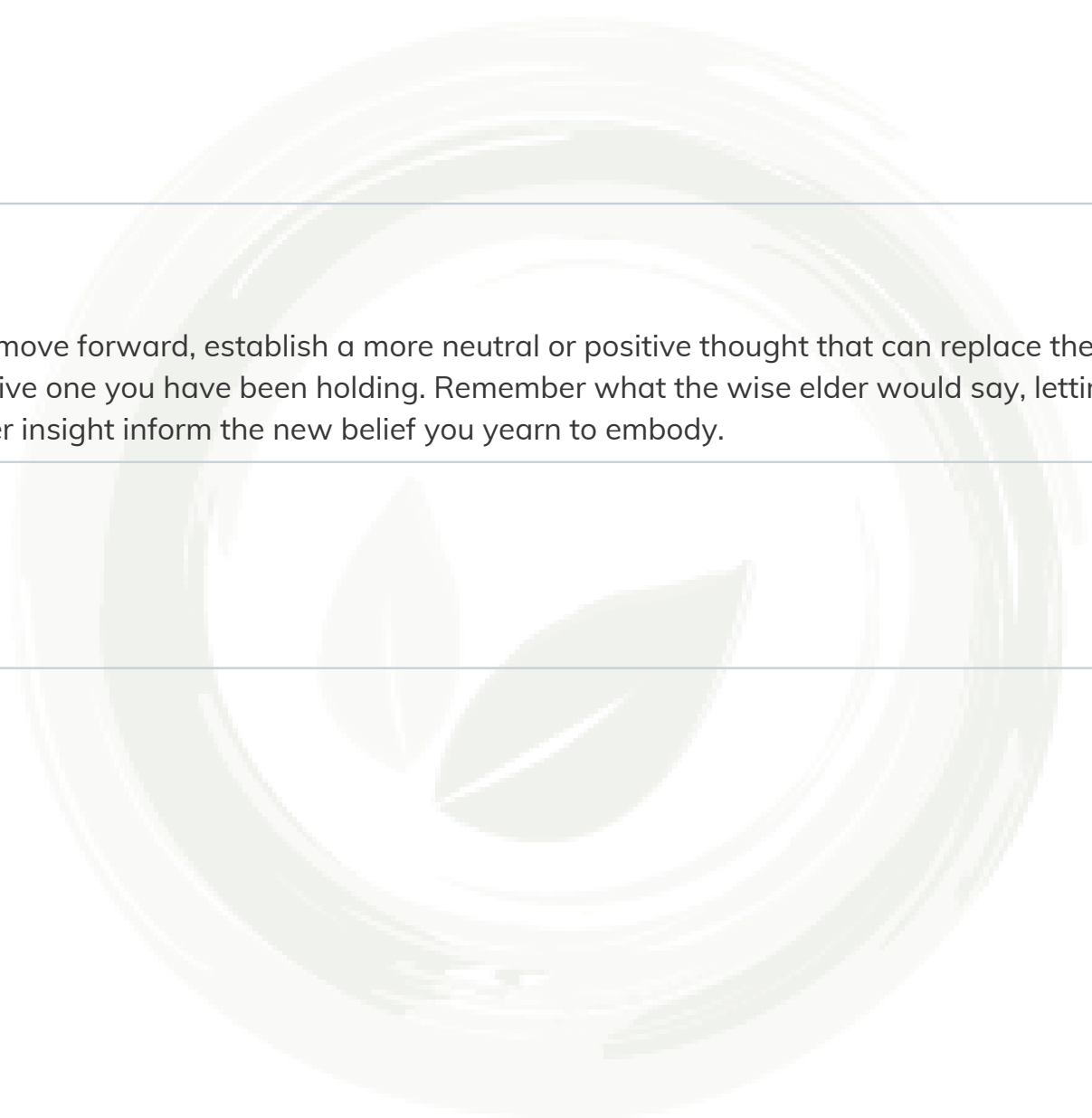
You might use the following questions to help open up new possibilities:

- Is there another way of seeing this?
- What is a more neutral way of viewing this? What would be a positive way?
- What am I not seeing? What is my current viewpoint missing?



# Compassionately Questioning Negative Thoughts

4. If the negative thought remains firmly held, consider what a wise elder of loving caregiver might say to you right now. What would their perspective be of this situation? Can you offer yourself the words that your wisest inner self would speak?



5. To move forward, establish a more neutral or positive thought that can replace the negative one you have been holding. Remember what the wise elder would say, letting this deeper insight inform the new belief you yearn to embody.

# Seeing Yourself Through Loving Eyes

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
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Through what lens do we see ourselves? Do we witness the person we are through a lens of warmth and love or through one of judgment? This practice is an invitation to see ourselves through that first lens, honoring and embracing ourselves with kindness and care.

## **PRACTICE:**

1. Begin this practice by calling to mind someone in your life who loves you deeply. It does not have to be someone who is currently present in your life. If someone from your past is better suited, choose that person. Alternatively, consider a loving pet.
2. Find a comfortable space where you can meditate and reflect for the next little while. When you are ready, close your eyes and imagine yourself sitting in a cozy room with this person or pet. Meet eyes with this being, taking as much time as you need to really harness their presence in your mind.
3. When you are ready, begin to consider how they view you. Start to witness yourself through their eyes, embracing the love, care, and appreciation they hold for you. Consider: "What does this person see in me?"

# Seeing Yourself Through Loving Eyes

4. Ensure that you are practicing patience and compassion throughout this practice. For some of us, witnessing ourselves through eyes of love can be so unfamiliar that it brings up a wave of inner resistance. Acknowledge if this arises for you and then return to the loving, compassionate center of your chest as you explore this.

5. Wrap up this visualization by making note of all the wonderful qualities this person sees in you. When you are ready, slowly open your eyes to the world around you.

## REFLECTION:

What was it like to view myself through loving eyes? How might I explore this practice in my daily life?



*NOTE: This exercise was inspired by the work of James Baraz in his book, 'Awakening Joy.'*



# Self-Compassion Break

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
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How often do we take pause from the thinking, analyzing, and judging mind to practice self-compassion? For a lot of us, it is easier to cultivate loving, accepting thoughts for another than it is to offer this kindness to ourselves. This practice is an invitation to offer ourselves the same kindness and compassion that we would offer a loved one, helping us to embrace ourselves with love.

## PRACTICE:

This exercises can be practiced in two ways. First, you might like to set an alarm for three times in your day. When the alarm goes off, it serves as a reminder to take a self-compassion break. Alternatively, you might simply keep this notion in mind so that you can come to it anytime you are feeling worried, anxious, stressed, or caught in a negative thought pattern.

1. When the alarm goes off (or when you notice you need a time-out from the mind), find a safe space to step aside to where you can comfortably close your eyes for a few moments.
2. Eyes closed, draw one or both hands to your heart, letting them rest flat on your chest. Take three full, deep breaths into the body, letting both chest and belly expand.

# Self-Compassion Break

3. Take this time to acknowledge that you are struggling, offering yourself any words of support or compassion that you might offer a loved one. Be there for yourself as a friend, holding yourself unconditionally for a few more full breaths.

4. Before ending the practice, take a few moments to silently repeat the phrases:

- I honor and support myself.
- I love and accept myself.
- I practice peace and patience.
- I am worthy of my own compassion and kindness.

You may repeat these as many times as you feel called to.

5. Take a final moment to offer yourself any other words you might need to hear. When you are ready to carry on with your day, slowly open your eyes. Carry this self-compassion with you as you move forward.

## REFLECTION:

How did it feel to practice this simple exercise of self-compassion? How might you incorporate this into your daily routine?

# Taking in the Good

Date / Time:

So far today, have you brought kind awareness to your:

Thoughts?  Heart?  Body?  None

To begin this Meditation, please bring kind awareness to

- why you chose this topic
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## PURPOSE / EFFECTS

Neuroscience shows that memory has a negative bias. It is much easier to remember the bad stuff that has happened to us than the good. This leads to needless suffering and a generally pessimistic outlook.

Taking in the Good allows us to focus on positive experiences and to let go of negative ones. It is not about putting a happy shiny face on things, nor is it about turning away from the hard things in life. But it is about nourishing a solid well-being, contentment, and peace inside that is a rock, a refuge, a home base you can always return to and come from.

The result of this is a gradual improvement in a general sense of wellbeing, as well as a reduction in the painfulness of negative memories.

## METHOD

Turn positive facts into positive experiences. Actively look for good news, particularly the little stuff of daily life that's all around: the faces of children, a sense of your own tenacity, the smell of an orange, a memory from a happy vacation, a minor success at work, and so on.

# Taking in the Good

Then, bring a mindful awareness to it, opening up to it, letting it affect you. It's like preparing a meal: rather than just looking at it, dig in with a big spoon!

2. Savor the experience. It's delicious! Make it last by keeping your attention on it for 5, 10, even 20 seconds. Try not to jump onto something else. Focus on the sensations and emotions of the experience. Let the experience be big and strongly felt, filling your body. For example, allow the feeling of being liked to bring warmth to your whole chest.

3. Pay particular attention to the rewarding aspects of the experience, like how fulfilling and cozy it feels to get a big hug from a child.

4. Imagine or feel that the experience is sinking deeply into your mind and body, like warm sun on a T-shirt, water into a sponge, or a jewel placed in your heart. Keep relaxing your body and absorbing the experience.

5. Healing. This is an option, extra step. Here you use positive experiences to soothe, balance, and even replace negative ones. When a negative memory or feeling arises, allow your positive experience (that you cultivated in the previous steps) arise at the same time. Hold these two experiences within yourself at the same time.

When two things are held in mind at the same time, they begin connecting with each other. That's one reason why talking about hard things in a supportive relationship – with friends, or a teacher or therapist – is often so healing: painful material gets infused with the comfort, encouragement, and closeness you experience with the other person.

Over time, this has a strong healing effect on negative material.

## **HISTORY**

This method was created by psychologist Rick Hanson.

## **CAUTIONS**

Getting the benefits of this method requires repeated practice over a long period of time. It is not so much a “quick fix,” as a long term strategy for improving your wellbeing.

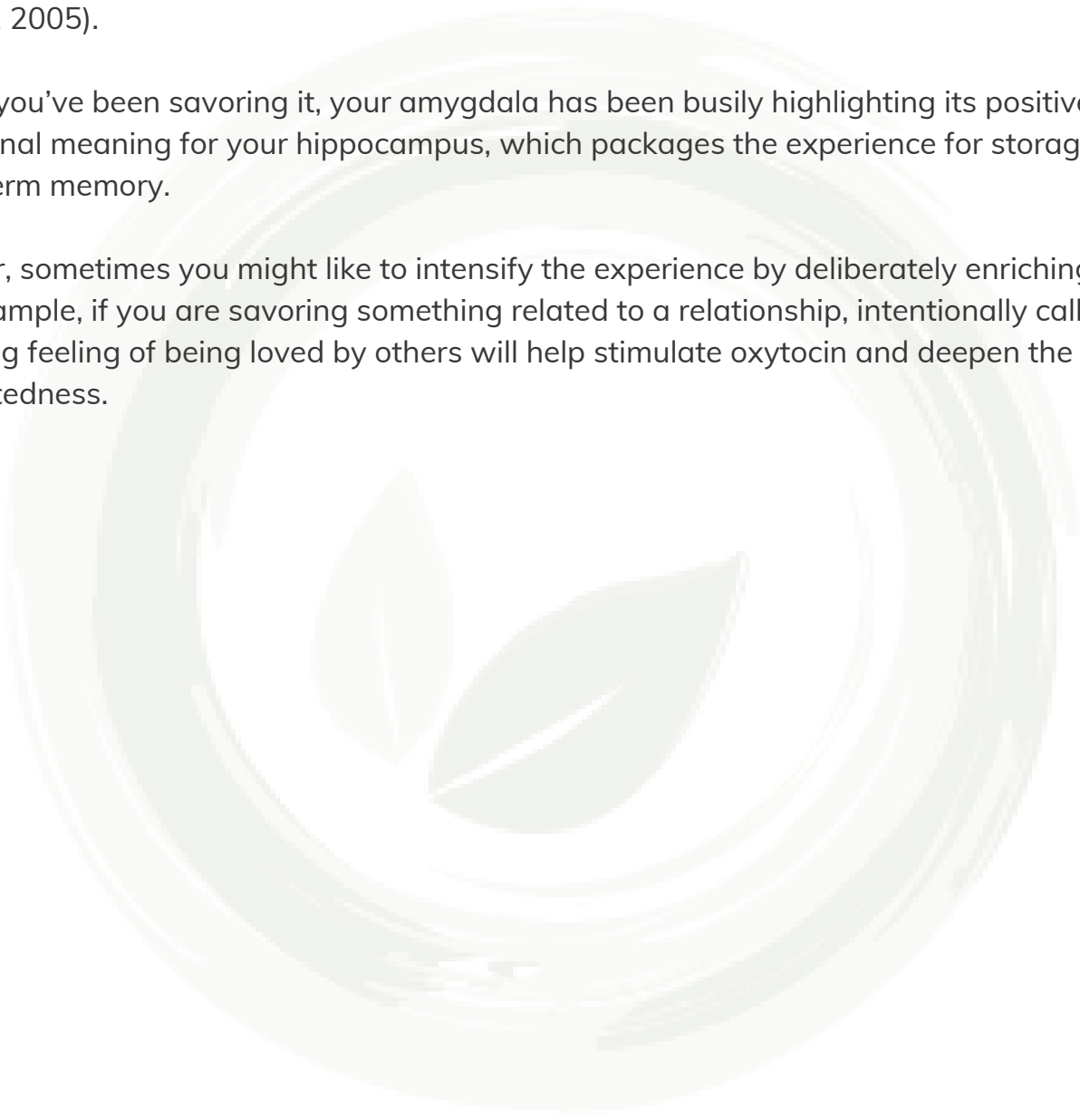
# Taking in the Good

## ■ NOTES

The longer that something is held in awareness and the more emotionally stimulating it is, the more neurons that fire and thus wire together, and the stronger the trace in memory (Lewis, 2005).

While you've been savoring it, your amygdala has been busily highlighting its positive emotional meaning for your hippocampus, which packages the experience for storage in long-term memory.

Further, sometimes you might like to intensify the experience by deliberately enriching it. For example, if you are savoring something related to a relationship, intentionally calling up a strong feeling of being loved by others will help stimulate oxytocin and deepen the sense of relatedness.



# Cultivating Compassion

Date / Time:

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

Heart

Mind

Body

Breath

Environment

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- why you chose this topic
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## PURPOSE / EFFECTS:

1. Can you envision a state of mind where there is no harsh, condemning judgment of yourself or of others? This state of mind does not view the world in terms of good and evil or right and wrong; it sees only “suffering and no suffering.”
2. What would happen if we did not judge any of the things that we see? We would see things that bring happiness and things that bring pain but we would not see fear, guilt or shame. Wouldn't it be remarkable if we saw the world this way? When we only see suffering and no suffering, we feel compassion.
3. Compassion can lead to forceful action without judgment. For example, if we see a small child reaching for a cup filled with hot coffee, we instantly respond. This response is born out of the compassion we feel; we move to keep the child from harm, without any judgment.
4. Compassion is the ability to feel someone else's experiences and wish them to be free from pain. To view life compassionately, we have to look beyond the end result of what is happening now, and look at the underlying conditions that caused the end result.
5. If you have insight into someone's history you may realize past events cause them to behave in a certain way. Then you can see the conditions that led up to that situation, not just the end result of those conditions.

# Cultivating Compassion

6. For example, two people, a man and a woman, both suffered childhood abuse. The woman grew up to be fearful; the man grew up to be angry.

7. As adults they found themselves working together and the fearful woman disliked the angry man – until she gained some insight to his background and realized he had suffered the same as she had.

8. This kind of understanding does not mean that we condone a person's negative behavior but it does mean that we can acknowledge the underlying factors that make up that person's life opening us up to compassion and forgiveness.

9. Think of someone that you have had a problem with in the past. Can you look beyond the problem and see that underlying conditions may have caused that person to react negatively – or perhaps underlying conditions caused you to react negatively. Can you view the situation with compassion and forgiveness?



10. How will you take what you learned from this forward into your life?

# Loving-Kindness

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

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## PURPOSE / EFFECTS:

This meditation technique will enhance your feelings of unconditional love towards other people. It will also help you to love yourself. It reduces feelings of judgment and condemnation, and increases the sense of compassion, connection, and open-heartedness. You will radiate a sense of peace, love, happiness, and comfort to all around you. If you are upset or angry, this technique will calm you down.

## METHOD:

### Summary

Wish good things for yourself and other people (and animals, the planet, etc.).

### Long Version

1. Sit in any comfortable meditation posture.
2. Allow your mind and body to settle.
3. Now begin to do the metta recitations.



# Loving-Kindness

## A. For Yourself

- May I be safe and protected.
- May I be peaceful and happy.
- May I be healthy and strong.
- May I experience well being.

Continue reciting this for as long as you wish, bringing up feelings of really wishing these things for yourself. If you wish, you can end the technique here; or you can continue by offering loving-kindness to a friend.

## B. For a Friend

- May he or she be safe and protected.
- May he or she be peaceful and happy.
- May he or she be healthy and strong.
- May he or she experience well being.

Continue reciting this for as long as you wish, bringing up feelings of really wishing these things for your friend. If you wish, you can end the technique here; or you can continue by offering loving-kindness to a loved one.

## C. For a Loved One

- May he or she be safe and protected.
- May he or she be peaceful and happy.
- May he or she be healthy and strong.
- May he or she experience well being.

Continue reciting this for as long as you wish, bringing up feelings of really wishing these things for your loved one.

When you are finished, offer to all beings the feelings of love, compassion, friendliness, and openness you are having. This technique can also be done when going about any other activity.

# Loving-Kindness

## HISTORY:

Offering Lovingkindness is a traditional Buddhist technique, usually called by its Pali name, metta. The version presented here comes from the Buddhist scripture entitled, The Path of Purification (**Visuddhimagga**). There are, however, many versions and variations in a great number of Buddhist texts. See **metta**.

## CAUTIONS:

Do not become lost in complex thoughts about your relationship with the people to whom you are offering lovingkindness. Instead, the intention is simply to radiate love, joy, and happiness to them. Also, do not become involved in sexual fantasies about a person.

## NOTES:

As your practice of lovingkindness becomes strong, you can also do the metta recitations for neutral persons, or even for people who you may normally consider to be difficult or even “enemies.”

This is considered to be an advanced version of the practice, only to be done once your momentum of lovingkindness is so strong that doing the offerings for difficult persons will not fill you with negative thoughts and emotions.

Loving-kindness can also be offered for animals, the planet, all beings in the universe, and so forth.

# Meeting Mindfulness With Kindness

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
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Each of us has an inner critic that lives somewhere within the analytical mind. There are numerous times in life when this critic appears, one of which is during mindfulness practice.

Since most of us hold preconceived ideas about what a 'good' meditation practice is supposed to look like, the critic is quick to point out when we're not 'doing it right'. However, mindfulness is not about perfection. Instead, it is about coming back, again and again, to what is right here – with kindness, patience, and compassion.

The simple practice outlined below is a reminder to maintain self-directed kindness when the mind wanders during meditation – when we fear we're not 'doing it right'.

## **PRACTICE:**

1. Set a timer for 10 minutes. This will give the mind long enough time to wander during your quiet practice.
2. Come to a comfortable seated position, closing your eyes and turning towards the breath to begin your meditation. Let the breath be your anchor during this practice. Follow it until the timer rings.

# Meeting Mindfulness With Kindness

3. During this time, the mind will undoubtedly pull your attention away from the breath – even if only for a moment. Regardless of how long the mind ends up wandering, let a warm smile spread across your face as you come back to the breath each time you notice it has drifted off.
4. Soften the belly as your attention settles back on the breath, and then quietly repeat: *I am here. I am enough.*
5. Continue this every time you notice the mind has drifted off: warm smile, return of attention to the breath, affirmation '*I am here. I am enough*'.
6. Continue until the alarm goes off and, after it does, thank yourself for showing up for this practice exactly as you are.

## REFLECTIONS:

1. How did it feel to warmly embrace yourself every time the mind wandered? Did it feel unusual, nourishing, difficult, or something else?

2. Where else might you use these affirmations in your life? Where else might you remind yourself, '*I am enough*'?

# Evaluating Your Self-Punishment

Date / Time:

So far today, have you brought kind awareness to your:

Thoughts?  Heart?  Body?  None

To begin this Meditation, please bring kind awareness to

- why you chose this topic
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1. In what ways did you punish yourself during this period of time?

2. What did you do to deserve this punishment?

# Evaluating Your Self-Punishment

3. Are there any other viable ways you could respond to what happened besides punishing yourself?



4. Are you willing to take these viable alternate ways? If so, why? If not, why?

5. What action will you take from what you've observed?

# Letter of Self-Compassion

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
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We tend to be our toughest critics. Holding ourselves to unrealistic standards of perfection, it is not uncommon to judge or criticize ourselves in one or various aspects of our being.

As we learn to speak to ourselves with compassion, we slowly begin to counteract the negative self-speak of the mind. We start to become more content, confident, and at peace with who we are.

This practice is a journal exercise that invites us to write ourselves a letter of care and kindness from the point of view of someone who loves us.

Alternatively, we might write this letter from the 'wise elder within' – the voice inside that knows we are enough just as we are.

## PRACTICES:

1. Take a moment to consider one or two of the things you judge yourself for or dislike about yourself. Reflect for just a couple of minutes on how these perceived inadequacies make you feel. Notice how the mind can narrow in on these areas, failing to see the complete picture of who you are.

# Letter of Self-Compassion

2. Next, bring to mind the image of someone who loves you. It might be a friend, a parent, a grandparent, or anyone else – and it can be someone of either your past or present. Alternatively, you might take a moment to visualize your inner wise elder – the loving, compassionate, and clear-sighted self that lives inside of you.

3. Now write a letter to yourself from this person you have imagined (or from the wise, loving self within). In this letter, address how this perceived shortcoming is viewed from the person you've chosen to write as. How might it be viewed from an external, compassionate, caring lens? Write from your innermost sense of kindness, care, and non-judgment.



4. After you finish writing the letter, take some time to read it back to yourself. Notice how it makes you feel.

5. Consider that the words written here did not come from another person or from a 'different' you: they came from the person that you are right now. They are your own words that arose from the side of yourself that is self-compassionate and self-caring. Know that this capacity for self-kindness is always present within you.