## Lovingkindness for a friend and for yourself

Give yourself a moment to connect with your body. Notice the sensation of your body sitting here… the sense of your head resting on your neck resting on your shoulders, back, your lower body, all being supported by gravity. Sitting in a dignified posture in which your spine is upright but not rigid. (Pause)… Alert and relaxed… You can gently let your eyes close or you can simply rest your gaze downward on a spot, whatever feels right to you.

And turning your attention to the waves of the breath. Maybe having a curious attitude toward the breath. Can you notice where one in-breath ends and the next out-breath begins? Can you feel the temperature of the breath? (Pause)…Just allowing the breath to move with its own rhythm as you follow it.

With each outbreath, let your body sinks a little further into your seat.

Let’s again start by bringing to mind a time when you experienced a sense of warmth, connection, or safety with another being. You can choose a situation you have already chosen before, or you can choose one you have not yet used…. Let that situation come to mind…If your mind is having trouble settling on a situation to choose, just choose the first one that comes to mind. Let yourself drop into that moment… As much as you can recall, put yourself back in that situation in all of the details that you can see in your mind’s eye... Can you recall the feeling in your chest?... Do you sense the curve of a smile wanting to form on your face or in your eyes?... The safe feeling in your belly?... Just drop in for a moment.

Next, bring to mind the image of someone you care about, have warm feelings toward, or feel a sense of positive connection to.

As best you can, try to get an image or sense of that person or being in your mind’s eye. You might imagine you are with them, sitting beside them or walking alongside them. Maybe it is helpful to imagine that you are placing a hand on their back or shoulder. You are really present for this person you care about. Now, we will begin to wish this being well by extending words of kindness to them. I’ll be offering some phrases as guidance. You’re invited to use these phrases or choose whatever words work to express your wishes of love or kindness toward this being.

And now, using these phrases or ones of your own choosing, silently repeat to yourself:

May you be well

May you be kind to yourself

May you be joyful

May you be safe and at ease

And again, while you say these phrases, allow yourself to connect with the intention that they express:

May you be well

May you be kind to yourself

May you be joyful

May you be safe and at ease

And again, extending wishes of kindness and warmth toward this person you care about:

May you be well

May you be kind to yourself

May you be joyful

May you be safe and at ease

For a few moments now, I’d like you gently consider a statement, sensing the truth of it … “I want to be happy…Or maybe it’s I want to live a meaningful life, a full life. Or maybe just be free from suffering. Or experience peace. Something like that. See if that is true for you that these are experiences you want in your life. [pause]

And then consider the following thought, “you don’t experience happiness as much as you want to. Happiness is elusive.” Many times in your life, you’ve set off to do something expecting it to bring you happiness -- a new relationship, a new job, only to find it was much more complicated than that. Happiness is elusive and suffering tends to come along unexpectedly and more often than we’d like. That’s true of all of us. See if you can accept the truth of this situation for all of us. We all want to be happy and yet it’s hard to achieve….There may be a sense of hurt, heartache as we encounter this truth. Maybe a sense of tenderness or vulnerability. That’s OK. This is a recognition that we are doing something difficult in being human. Being a human being is not easy.

Now sense if there is some part of you that can offer some support, some kindness on this difficult path of being human. Letting this kind, supportive, compassionate part of you wish you well.

Offering words of support to yourself like the following, or making up your own:

May I be well

May I be kind to myself

May I be joyful

May I be safe and at ease

Again, giving yourself support, empathy, kindness as you journey this path of a human life. Perhaps placing a hand on your heart if that feels right to you and repeating:

May I be well

May I be kind to myself

May I be joyful

May I be safe and at ease

For another couple minutes or so I’ll be silent and let you continue to wish yourself well. You may gently repeat these same phrases to yourself, or you may generate your own. Whatever feels like a way to offer yourself support. [pause for one minute and then say] If your mind has wandered, that’s normal. If you can do so gently, just return your attention to this intention to be supportive of yourself and back to some phrases of kindness and support. [let one more minute pass]

And now you can gradually let any imagery fade away. Being attentive to what is present for you, as you sit here in this space where you are. Appreciating the sounds around you, the light, the air touching your skin. Appreciating that you’ve been doing something skillful in the last few minutes. That you’ve been consciously cultivating an attitude of kindness and of friendliness and generosity toward yourself and others. Noticing once more the feeling of your body in this chair, resting here with any feelings that may have emerged……And if your eyes were closed, when you are ready, you can open them and return your attention back to the room.