## Lovingkindness for a friend and a stranger

Give yourself a moment to settle into your chair. Sitting in a dignified posture that is at once awake and relaxed. (Pause)…If it is right for you to let your eyes close, go ahead and close them, or you can keep them open with a soft gaze.

Allow your arms and legs to be held down by gravity… let your hands rest on your lap or the arms of the chair… let your feet be supported by the floor…(Pause)…

And turning your attention to the sensation of inflow and outflow of breath. Noticing the sensation of breath in the belly, the rise and fall of the chest, the air at the tips of the nostrils, or the body as a whole sitting here breathing. (Pause)…Just allowing the breath to move with its own rhythm as you follow it.

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 in your mind. What do you feel…? See…? Smell…? Taste…? Hear?... Notice what it feels like in your heart center, if there is any curve of a smile wanting to form on your face. If not, that is quite okay. It is the intention to practice that matters.

Next, bring to mind the image of someone you care about, have warm feelings toward, or feel a sense of positive connection to. The basic idea is to find someone you already have existing warm feelings toward.

As best you can, try to get an image or sense of that person in your mind’s eye. You might imagine you are with that person, like guardian angel, as they go about their daily activities or you might imagine they are here with you. 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

Next, I’d like to invite you to imagine someone you don’t know very well. A relative stranger, but someone you’ve at least met before, like a grocery store clerk. As best you can, hold an image of that person in your mind’s eye.

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

Again, holding the image of this person in your heart, extending wishes of kindness and warmth toward this person:

May you be well

May you be kind to yourself

May you be joyful

May you be safe and at ease

For another minute or so I’ll be silent and let you gently repeat phrases like this or other phrases of kindness while picturing this person in your mind’s eye. Some people like to time the phrases with their outbreath, others don’t. It’s up to you.

And now you can gradually let any imagery fade away. And now 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 others as well. Noticing once more the feeling of your body in this chair, resting here with any feelings of warmth or kindness 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.