## Lovingkindness for a friend

Give yourself a moment to settle into your chair or your seat on the floor. Try to find a posture that is upright, but not rigid, so that your body is at once alert and also that you are able to let go of any unnecessary tension (Pause)…You can keep your eyes open or close them. Either is fine. What’s most important is that you can remain awake to be able to practice.

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 very gently, becoming aware of the sensation of breath in the body…. Connecting to the wavelike flow of breath in the belly, the chest, the tips of the nostrils, or the body as a whole…wherever it is easiest for you to feel it (Pause)…Just allowing the breath to move with its own rhythm as you follow it.

Be aware of the space around you. The physical space in front of you and behind you. To your right and left. Above you and below you. Having a sense that your attention is filling this space, this space all around you. Maybe noticing the sounds around you in that space.

In this practice, we’ll be cultivating lovingkindess, or you just might call it kindness. This is a kind of friendship practice… an intention to have an open heart that is supportive and gentle. It is a wish to anyone – other people or animals or ourselves, to be cared for, loved, and safe.

Let’s start by bringing to mind a time in your life where you experienced a sense of kindness, warmth, or connection when with another person or being. It could be that you felt kindness toward another person or that you felt that person’s warmth and love directed toward you. Either is fine. You may recall the unconditional love you have felt in the eyes of a beloved pet. You may recall someone with whom you had some nice warm cup of tea and the way you felt in that moment. You may recall a moment of fondness toward a young child. Or a teacher or neighbor who smiled warmly whenever they saw you. You might remember a time you have been generous to another person or when someone was kind to you. It’s okay if you don’t actually feel warmth as you recall this person or animal. It just matters that you choose someone or situation that warmed your heart in the past, even for a moment. Allow yourself to imagine that experience or feeling sense of being in that moment. Can you picture this person’s or animal’s eyes during a moment when they warmed your heart? What does their face look like? What do they sound like in that moment? And, as you remember this experience…notice how you feel in your body. See if you can notice what is happening in your body with an attitude of curiosity as you engage in this practice of lovingkindness.

Next, bring to mind the image of someone you care about, have warm feelings toward, or feel a sense of positive connection to. Ideally, you will pick someone where the relationship feels relatively simple and uncomplicated and where warm feelings come easily, even if they are not strong at the moment. 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

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 friendliness toward others. 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.