

Instructions for Metta (Lovingkindness) Meditation

Metta involves sending loving-kindness to a series of individuals--*our self, benefactors, loved ones, neutral others, and difficult others, then to all beings everywhere*--usually in that order. We do Metta in steps so that our hearts can gradually open if they are closed or blocked in some way. Done in stages, this practice opens us, softens and gentles us ... And by the time we get to the end of the blessing practice, hopefully, our heart is as wide as the world.

Of course, it takes time, commitment, and practice for this to transform us, as does any new spiritual practice.

We say the 4 lines of blessing prayerfully, holding in thought and heart the person whom we wish to enfold in lovingkindness. We begin with ourselves first, because without an attitude of lovingkindness toward ourselves, we cannot be genuinely openhearted toward others. So we begin where we are. Here are the 4 lines:

May I be safe.
May I be strong.
May I be happy.
*May I be peaceful and at ease.**

We offer the stanzas in a gentle rhythm, paired with our breath, taking all the time we need to feel safe, well, happy and at ease.

The next step in Metta practice is to think of your **benefactors**—those individuals (human or divine, here or gone) to whom you are most grateful for guiding your life, for sharing their wise selves with you, and helping you along the way.

Name one, and hold him or her in your mind's eye, as if he or she is standing right in front of you.

Now, say the 4 line prayer for that person:

_____ (Name),

May you be safe.
May you be strong.
May you be happy.
May you be peaceful and at ease.

You may do this for just one individual and proceed on to the next step, or offer Metta to a number of benefactors. There is no one way to do this; just follow your heart and do what feels right.

Now we bring our attention to **loved ones**: people who are "easy to love." Dear others. Friends, family members, respected acquaintances, anyone who comes to mind that you deeply care for.

As before, select one person and offer the 4 line prayer toward them. Name them, breathe evenly, and imagine this dear one receiving your blessing. As before, with benefactors, you may pray for just one or go through a list.

Now, notice how you are feeling, how your heart may be warming and opening to those around you.

Stay with this feeling. Let it fill you, wash over you.

Proceed through the practice adding the **neutral persons**, **difficult others**, and, finally, **all beings** everywhere (including our animal friends.)

Note:

** The phrases I use in my Metta practice and the one I teach others may appear different than those in traditional teaching. The reasoning for this is explained in the audio instructions.*