**Extending Kindness and Compassion to Ourselves and Others**

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The positive experiences of social connection, caring relationships, and community are linked to happiness, resiliency, and well-being. We find ourselves in situations where we cannot affect a change or make a difference in our own or someone else’s life. The ancient practice of loving-kindness meditation (also known as “metta” meditation) focuses on developing feelings of goodwill, kindness, and warmth – feelings that we can control. Loving-kindness meditation serves as one way to take a pause, relieve stress, and to extend kindness and compassion to ourselves and others.

**IMPACT and SUPPORT**

Research has shown that routinely practicing loving-kindness mediation can induce a relaxation response and increase feelings of love, joy, hope, well-being, compassion, and social connection.  It has also been shown to decrease emotional tension and symptoms of depression and posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

**PRACTICE CONSIDERATIONS**

This practice is appropriate for any location at any time of the day. Loving-kindness meditation can be practiced seated or lying down, with the eyes closed or open with a soft downward gaze. Classically, the meditation is practiced using 6 categories and 4 phrases.

**SCRIPT**

* Start by sitting or lying down in a comfortable position. You may choose to close your eyes or have a soft downward gaze.
* Relax the breath by taking three slow, deep breaths. First, direct your mind toward a loved one.
* Bring their image to mind, how you feel around them, and think of the gifts they bring to your life.
* Silently repeat the following phrases directed towards this person:

**May he/she be happy**
**May he/she be healthy**
**May he/she be peaceful**
**May he/she be safe**

If these phrases do not resonate with you, feel free to choose other phrases that speak more clearly to what you want for this person. You may repeat these phrases several times directed toward this person. When you feel complete, let the image or sense of this person fade.

**Repeat the above using some or all of the following categories:**

• Teacher or mentor who has had a positive influence on your life
• A neutral person such as a grocery store clerk or a neighbor, or someone at work
• A difficult or challenging person
• Yourself
• All people and beings

**End the practice when you feel complete.**