

Compassion Meditation

What is Compassion Meditation?

Compassion meditation (also known as loving kindness meditation) involves actively cultivating compassion by repeating phrases or expressions of well-wishes and compassion. The goals of this type of meditation are to extend compassion toward the self and others. Research has found that compassion meditation increases positive emotions and reduces stress, anger, depression, and anxiety. Also, compassion meditation can help individuals manage chronic pain and improve immune response.

Practice Compassion Meditation:

1. With your eyes closed, begin focused, diaphragmatic breathing.
2. Congratulate yourself for being willing to take this time out of your busy day to become a more compassionate person to yourself and others...
3. Take a moment to reflect on yourself and the person you are – your hopes and fears, strengths and weaknesses. Reflect on your desire to be healthy, safe, and at peace. As you do this, silently repeat the following to yourself:
 - a. May I be healthy
 - b. May I be safe
 - c. May you be free of suffering
 - d. May I be happy
 - e. May I be at peace
4. Be with these intentions for a few moments...
5. Now think of one person you love, respect, or have other positive emotions toward. They can be anyone from your past or present, or even someone you never knew, such as a religious figure. Visualize this person in your mind, reflecting on what makes them special. Now direct these phrases toward them:
 - a. May you be healthy
 - b. May you be safe
 - c. May you be free of suffering
 - d. May you be happy
 - e. May you be at peace
6. Be with these intentions for a few moments...
7. Now imagine a person in your life that you don't have strong feelings for. A person that you don't dislike, but a person you don't necessarily really like either. It's someone you feel neutral about. Try to get a clear image of them in your head. Direct these phrases toward them:
 - a. May you be healthy
 - b. May you be safe
 - c. May you be free of suffering
 - d. May you be happy
 - e. May you be at peace
8. Be with these intentions for a few moments...
9. Imagine a person that you do not like, someone you have negative feelings toward

- or someone you have difficulty getting along with. Imagine them in your mind, and reflect on their desire to be free of suffering. Direct these phrases toward them:
- a. May you be healthy
 - b. May you be safe
 - c. May you be free of suffering
 - d. May you be happy
 - e. May you be at peace
10. Be with these intentions for a few moments...
11. Extend these good intentions to everyone in the world. Try to imagine all of the people in the world living their lives in different places. Consider their desire to be healthy, safe, happy, and at peace. Direct these phrases toward all people:
- a. May everyone in the world be healthy
 - b. May everyone in the world be safe
 - c. May everyone in the world be free of suffering
 - d. May everyone in the world be happy
 - e. May everyone in the world be at peace
12. Be with these intentions for a few moments...
13. Extending compassion even further, imagine all living beings in the world. Reflect on the universal desire that we all, as living beings, have to live free of suffering, in safety, in health, and in peace. Direct these phrases toward all living things in the universe:
- a. May all living beings be healthy
 - b. May living beings be safe
 - c. May living beings be free of suffering
 - d. May living beings be happy
 - e. May living beings be at peace
14. Be with these intentions for a few moments...
15. Reflect once more on all living beings with compassion, repeating to yourself a few times: May all living beings be healthy, safe, free of suffering, happy, and at peace.
16. When you are ready, slowly and gently open your eyes.

Compassion Meditation Tips:

1. It is recommended that you practice this meditation for approximately 20 minutes. However, it can be a useful technique to practice even if you only have a few free moments in your day.
2. You may complete this exercise while sitting, lying down, standing, or walking. Thus, you can complete it any time, and in most places.

(Adapted from Stahl, B. & Goldstein, E. (2010). A Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction Workbook. New Harbinger Publications, Inc.: Oakland, CA.)