

Meditation on Lovingkindness

Discussion

How can we practice lovingkindness?

We can be kind, friendly and helpful to others, and we can be patient and tolerant with others. We can also practice lovingkindness very simply, by just wishing that all beings be peaceful and happy.

Or we can feel this wish in a deeper way by meditating on lovingkindness.

We make this wish for all beings, not only for people who love us, who are friendly and kind, and for animals that are cute and loveable,

But also for those who don't love us, who are unkind, unfriendly, or harm others.

And for creatures that bite, sting, are poisonous, or attack and harm or kill others.

And for people who are selfish, hateful, aggressive, or violent, or who are bullies or criminals.

Why should we wish that they be happy and peaceful? Why have lovingkindness for them?

Here are three reasons:

First, when people are truly happy and peaceful then they won't harm others; they won't be aggressive or unkind.

Second, when we have lovingkindness for people and other beings that are aggressive or harmful, it helps us let go of uncomfortable feelings of hatred, anger or frustration.

This is because, while we're feeling lovingkindness, we can't feel at the same time hatred, anger, revenge, frustration or a wish to harm them.

Third, whenever we practice lovingkindness—when we wish others to be happy and peaceful—then we're making merit for ourselves, plus we're sharing merit with others.

How can we have lovingkindness toward harmful creatures and hateful people?

Let's start with animals and other creatures that bite, sting, are poisonous, or might attack us.

What are some examples of those types of animals and creatures? Poisonous snakes, scorpions, sharks, jellyfish, crocodiles, bears, tigers, lions, mosquitoes, ticks.

Why do they attack us or other beings? To be able to eat, or to protect themselves—to survive. They use their teeth, claws, stingers, or venom to survive.

Of course, we avoid them to protect ourselves from danger, but there's no reason to hate them for needing to eat, protect themselves and feel safe. We too need to eat, protect ourselves and feel safe.

Understanding that they have the same needs as we do, we send them our lovingkindness by wishing that they be happy and peaceful.

Next, how do we have lovingkindness toward people who bully, harm and even kill others, and those who are hateful, aggressive, or extremely selfish?

First, think about why they behave that way. It's because they are confused. They're confused from the poisons of anger, hatred, greed, jealousy, arrogance, or other negative feelings in their minds.

We have those feelings sometimes, too. We all get confused by those feelings and sometimes we say or do things that are selfish or unkind.

Those feelings are stressful, painful, very uncomfortable.

As it's often said, hurt people hurt people—people who are hurting inside hurt others.

By hurting or overpowering others, they're trying to make themselves feel better, important, brave and powerful. But it doesn't really make them feel much better.

And, by harming others, they are building up more negative karmas, making more suffering for themselves in the future.

They don't know how to get out of that situation; they don't know or practice the Dharma.

We can try to avoid them so we don't end up getting hurt or getting involved in their misbehavior, but we can feel compassion for their confusion and suffering.

With that compassion, we can wish that they find ways to get out of their confusion and experience deep and ongoing peace and happiness.

In other words, we wish that they have real happiness and the causes of happiness.

What are "causes of happiness"? Money, a nice home, good friends and so forth gives temporary happiness. But the real cause of getting those things is making merit—doing good deeds, being kind, and helping others—which also gives all kinds of happiness for the future.

Also, we can wish that they be free of suffering and the causes of suffering.

What are "causes of suffering"? We might think of illness, poverty, loneliness and so forth.

But the underlying real causes are confusion, ignorance, selfishness, and harming others.

How do we meditate on lovingkindness?

While we wish that all beings be peaceful and happy, we imagine—we visualize or see in our mind—many different beings—people and animals—appearing very relaxed and happy.

We imagine different creatures with sharp teeth, claws, poison or stingers, relaxing or sleeping.

We imagine many different people relaxed and genuinely happy, with warm, friendly smiles.

We wish that all beings be free from suffering and the causes of suffering, while visualizing in our mind many different beings suddenly being healed of all their pain, illness, worry and fear.

When should we practice lovingkindness?

Anytime! Anywhere!

In the morning, you can start your day with a lovingkindness prayer or meditation.

In the evening before you go to bed you can share the merits you made—your kind words and actions—by wishing "May all beings be happy and peaceful" or by doing a meditation on lovingkindness. This helps you sleep well.

Any time a person upsets you, you can think, "May that person have happiness and the causes of happiness; may that person be free from suffering and the causes of suffering."

This helps you let go of uncomfortable feelings, and gives you a constructive attitude—hoping that they find happiness by learning to be more kind, and that they find a way out of their confusion and suffering.

Guided Meditation

Let's try meditation on lovingkindness.

We start by sitting in a way that is comfortable but keeps us alert.

You can sit cross-legged on the floor, or in half-lotus posture with one foot on the opposite thigh, or in full lotus posture with both feet on the opposite thighs.

Or you can sit on your feet with your knees together on the floor in front of you.

Place one hand on the other palm in your lap, or place your hands on your knees or thighs.

Sit up tall with your back straight, and shoulders back (not hunched forward) but relaxed.

Gently close your eyes.

As you breathe in, remember to sit up tall.

As you breathe out, relax your shoulders, arms and hands.

Think: may my body be healthy and strong.

May my mind be calm and peaceful.

May I have happiness and the causes of happiness.

May I be free from suffering and the causes of suffering.

Think about your family; see them in your mind, smiling and peaceful.

May my family have happiness and the causes of happiness.

May they be free from suffering and the causes of suffering.

Think about your friends; see them in your mind, smiling and peaceful.

May my friends have happiness and the causes of happiness.

May they be free from suffering and the causes of suffering.

Think about all your teachers; see them in your mind, smiling and peaceful.

May all my teachers have happiness and the causes of happiness.

May they be free from suffering and the causes of suffering.

Think about all the students in your school, those who are friendly and those who are not friendly; see them in your mind, smiling and peaceful.

May all the students have happiness and the causes of happiness.

May they be free from suffering and the causes of suffering.

Think about all the animals, birds, insects and other creatures; those that fly in the air, those that live in the water, those that live on land, those that live in the Earth.

Think of those with sharp teeth or claws, stingers or poison.

See all those animals, birds, insects and other creatures in your mind, safe and peaceful.

May they have happiness and the causes of happiness.

May they be free from suffering and the causes of suffering.

Think about all the people on the Earth; so many people who are confused by poisons of hatred, anger, jealousy, arrogance, or selfishness; see them in your mind, smiling and peaceful.

May all the people on the Earth have happiness and the causes of happiness.
May they be free from suffering and the causes of suffering.

May all beings have happiness and the causes of happiness
May they be free from suffering and the causes of suffering.

Imagine your lovingkindness as a beautiful heart that sends out rays of light like the sun.
It shines brightly in all directions, sending out lovingkindness in all directions to all beings,
bringing them happiness and the causes of happiness,
taking away all their suffering and causes of suffering.

