

The Metta Bhavana Meditation

Introduction: - This is one of two meditations taught by the Triratna Buddhist centre that I used to attend, the other the mindfulness of breathing I introduced in week 1.

*“The original name of this practice is **metta bhavana**, which comes from the Pali language. Metta means ‘love’ (in a non-romantic sense), friendliness, or kindness: hence ‘loving-kindness’ for short. It is an emotion, something you feel in your heart. Bhavana means development or cultivation.”*

Therefore, the meditation is a tool to aid the cultivation of **“loving kindness”** By this we mean many aspects one being empathy – a willingness to see the world from another’s point of view, losing our fixed views.

Metta is the basis for compassion

There are five stages of this meditation; the meditation fosters healthy self-esteem, a positive attitude, greater awareness of others and as a consequence of regular practice much improved communication.

The sound of the bell will denote the next stage of the practice.

It’s a good idea to think of the people we will focus on before we start the meditation.

The Practise

1st Stage

We begin by dwelling upon positive feelings we have ourselves and upon our good qualities. We can use our imagination to help feelings to arise. We may simply say a phrase to ourselves which expresses self-appreciation: for example “May I be well”, “May I be happy” “May I be at peace.”. We may recall times when we have felt contented, fulfilled, effective, creative and aware of what delights us. Or we may imagine situations that create such feelings, such as a sunny day, or talking to a friend.

Working in this way a feeling of well being and happiness emerges.

2nd Stage

We choose a good friend and as we bring them into the practise we naturally feel our positivity expand to include them. We can use our imagination to stimulate our feelings, just as in the first stage. But now we say, “May he/she be well and happy”. We can try to picture our friend in a pleasant situation and feeling good.

3rd Stage

We choose a neutral person. This is someone we are aware of, but do not know personally. We do not have any particular like or dislike for them. It may be someone we see at the railway station, the post man, a local shopkeeper etc etc.

4th Stage

We choose an enemy, or someone with whom we find it difficult to communicate or agree. We try to see beyond the present disharmony, realising that our enemy too wishes to be happy, to live well.

5th Stage

Maintaining the positivity we feel, we bring together ourselves, our friend, the neutral person, and the person with whom we are having difficulty. Reflecting that we all wish to be happy and well, we develop the same level of goodwill towards all four.

Then we bring the wider perspective of life all around us into the practice. We think of others in our workplace or home and then go further out to people living in our immediate neighbourhood, city, county, and country. Thinking of people everywhere, wishing them well, identifying their happiness with ours we extend our mind throughout the world, thinking of all living beings – all life everywhere.

Finish: By re focusing on the breath and noticing if there is any change in our emotional state. Have we been able to create a feeling of positive emotions by the use of the practise?

Compassion is a sign of inner strength

“Compassion is, by nature, peaceful and gentle, but it is also very powerful”

A Quote by the Dalai Lama on Love & Compassion