

Loving-Kindness Meditation

Fifteen minutes of silently wishing well — to yourself, a loved one, a stranger, a difficult person, and everyone.

15 min practice + 5 min journal

Standard practice

Handwritten journal, dated & timed

GGIA difficulty: Moderate



1 Why you should try it

Practicing kindness is one of the most direct routes to happiness: research suggests that kind people tend to be more satisfied with their relationships and with their lives in general. We all have a natural capacity for kindness, but sometimes we don't take steps to nurture and express this capacity as much as we could.

Loving-kindness meditation (sometimes called "metta" meditation) is a great way to cultivate our propensity for kindness. It is a *mantra* meditation: you silently repeat a short phrase over and over, slowly, so that your attention rests on each phrase, mentally sending goodwill, kindness, and warmth toward others.

2 The session — Prof. Magee's 15-minute protocol

Follow these timings, not the website's. Set a timer. One session = the 15 minutes below, then 5 minutes of journaling immediately after. At least 4 sessions in your 2-week window — the guide recommends 3 times per week, 15 minutes each.

3'

3'

3'

3'

3'

This is Prof. Magee's five-part version. The phrases are the whole practice — repeat them slowly and let your attention rest on each one. To time yourself, use the free **Insight Timer** app (set interval bells every 3 minutes) or your phone's timer. A guided version to learn from: [youtube.com/watch?v=auS1HtAz6Bs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=auS1HtAz6Bs) (slightly different from the version below).

3

MIN

Yourself

Close your eyes. Sit with your feet flat and your spine straight; relax the whole body. Take a few deep breaths, let the breathing return to normal, and begin: "*May I be safe. May I be happy. May I be healthy. May I live with ease.*" Repeat, slowly.

3

MIN

Someone special

Picture someone who loves you or whom you love. Send the phrases to them: "*May you be safe. May you be happy. May you be healthy. May you live with ease.*"

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MIN

Someone neutral

Bring to mind an acquaintance — a classmate you don't know, a bus driver, the person at the deli. Like you, this person wishes to have a good life. Send them the same phrases.

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A friend — or a difficult person (challenging!)

Start with a friend. When you feel ready (maybe not in your first session), try someone you find difficult. Send them the phrases anyway. Notice the resistance; don't fight it, just keep repeating.

3

MIN

All beings everywhere

Widen out. Picture the whole globe in front of you as a small ball and send the phrases to all living beings who, like you, want to be happy: "May all beings be safe, happy, healthy, and live with ease." Take a deep breath in and out. Notice the state of your mind before you open your eyes.

3

Then journal — 5 minutes, by hand

- Top of the entry: **date and time**. Entries without both lose credit.
- Write for **5 minutes without stopping** (about 300 words). Messy is fine; stopping is not.
- Before / during / after: how did you feel at each point? Be specific — body, mood, thoughts.
- What surprised you? What felt fake, awkward, or easier than expected?
- **Prompt:** Which of the five targets was easiest to wish well, and which was hardest? What did the resistance feel like?
- **Prompt:** Did anything change in how you reacted to people after the session — in the hour, in the day?

4

Evidence that it works

Fredrickson, B. L., Cohn, M. A., Coffey, K. A., Pek, J., & Finkel, S. M. (2008)

People who practiced loving-kindness meditation daily for seven weeks reported a steady increase in their daily experience of positive emotions, such as joy, gratitude, contentment, hope, and love. They also reported greater life satisfaction and lower depressive symptoms following the intervention, compared to when they started. People who were on a waitlist to learn the practice didn't report these benefits.

5

Why it works

Loving-kindness meditation increases happiness in part by making people feel more connected to others — to loved ones, acquaintances, and even strangers. Research suggests that when people practice loving-kindness meditation regularly, they start automatically reacting more positively to others — and their social interactions and close relationships become more satisfying. Loving-kindness meditation can also reduce people's focus on themselves — which can, in turn, lower symptoms of anxiety and depression.

6

Know the research — for your presentation (APA 7)

In your presentation you will explain, **from memory and without notes**, the evidence behind each practice — who studied it, when, and what they found — plus something *not* written on the GGIA site or on this handout. Read these papers (SJNY library or Google Scholar), then follow their citations forward to find **your own article** — one more peer-reviewed study on this topic that is not the source study here (due Sun Dec 6). Take photos along the way; they are your slides.

Fredrickson, B. L., Cohn, M. A., Coffey, K. A., Pek, J., & Finkel, S. M. (2008). Open hearts build lives: Positive emotions, induced through loving-kindness meditation, build consequential personal resources. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 95(5), 1045–1062. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0013262>

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