



USC Yoga TT: Loving Kindness Meditation

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Metta/Maitri Meditation

AKA Loving Kindness Meditation

- The Buddhist concept of metta meditation, known in Yoga as maitri meditation, is commonly referred to in the western world as loving kindness meditation. In this practice, we train a heart-oriented, harmonizing style of mindfulness meditation that reframes lifestyle situations, develops positive emotional regulation strategies, and helps to heal the heart. Practicing in this manner, builds better relationships with our emotions that improve our well-being over time and can gradually be extended beyond ourselves and into the world as emotional intelligence.
- Loving kindness meditation has been scientifically shown to reduce anxiety, reduce negative affect or mood, reduce physical and emotional pain, reduce anger, reduce psychological stress, increase feelings of hope, increase positive social emotions in regard to others as well as one's overall emotional intelligence
- What's more, here's a great Huffpost article by a Stanford researcher that goes into even more scientific detail about the benefits of the loving kindness meditation practice:
http://www.huffingtonpost.com/emma-seppala-phd/18-sciencebased-reasons-t_b_5823952.html

How Yoga Views Emotional Health



- **Emotional health** is viewed as an extension of one's emotional intelligence, which is the ability to identify and manage your own emotions and the emotions of others. Emotional intelligence is generally said to include three skills: emotional awareness; the ability to harness emotions and apply them to tasks like thinking and problem solving; and the ability to manage emotions, which includes regulating your own emotions and cheering up or calming down other people.

Emotional Regulation

- **Emotional regulation** is a term generally used to describe a person's ability to effectively manage and respond to an emotional experience. People unconsciously use emotion regulation strategies to cope with difficult situations many times throughout each day. Most of us use a variety of emotion regulation strategies and are able to apply them to different situations in order to adapt to the demands of our environment. Some of these are healthy, some are not. Healthy coping strategies, such as managing stress with a walking program, do not cause harm. They can help to diffuse strong emotions, often allowing for a greater understanding of what led to the emotional experience.



Emotional Dysregulation

- **Emotional dysregulation** is when an individual does not respond to a person, place, thing, or event in a manner that would generally be considered within the normal range of emotions. An example of this might be rage over a broken nail, or hysterics over a missed appointment. It refers to an emotional response that is not well modulated.



Examples of Common Emotional Regulation Strategies

HEALTHY

- Talking with friends
- Exercising or Doing Breathwork
- Writing in a journal
- Meditation Therapy
- Taking care of self when physically ill
- Getting adequate sleep
- Paying attention to negative thoughts that occur before or after strong emotions
- Noticing when you need a break – and taking it!

UNHEALTHY

- Abusing alcohol or other substances
- Self-Injury
- Avoiding or withdrawing from difficult situations
- Physical or verbal aggression
- Excessive social media use, to the exclusion of other responsibilities



Let's practice a loving kindness meditation

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- Here's a link to the practice in case you weren't in class and/or want to do the guided practice again on your own:

<https://vimeo.com/785494474>

- You also might like this article with one of my favorite mindfulness and loving kindness meditation teachers Sharon Salzberg:

<https://www.mindful.org/loving-kindness-meditation-with-sharon-salzberg>

- Plus, this Youtube video of Sharon discussing and offering the practice:

[#06 Sharon Salzberg - Lovingkindness Meditation - YouTube](#)

Sharon leads a more brief 8-10 minute loving kindness practice at 14:30 into the YouTube video (rather than my 30 minute version). You might like that one better than the one from class or from my recording, or if you simply want a shorter meditation practice, so give it a try. Sharon's quite lovely as a person, too, and is a worthy follow on Instagram @sharonsalzberg for daily inspirations. She has lots of resources and other practices available on YouTube as well.

Loving Kindness Meditation Reflections

- If you'd like to reflect on the loving kindness meditation practice and/or journal about it, here are some ideas to reflect on and possible consider:
 - *What words did you choose as your loving kindness affirmations and what did you feel in relationship to those words while doing the practice? Do those words evoke certain feelings or aspirations for you about yourself or have relevancy to your life?*
 - *Who did you choose as your benefactor and/or as your person of challenge and why? Did you feel any positive changes inside of yourself in regard to your relationship with either person as a result of the practice? Please describe.*
 - *How did it feel doing the overall "send loving kindness to all beings everywhere" at the end? What does that mean to you and are there any similar practices you've done before or studied before in your own personal background whether from Yoga, religious traditions, and/or social customs?*
 - *If this was your first experience with doing a longer 10-30 minute meditation, what was that experience like for you? Did you stay present to your thoughts and emotions – and have a cup of tea with them when needed? Did you fall asleep? LOL. Were you able to "harness" your heart and mind? How? Please explain and describe your experience.*

