

A 3 WEEK COURSE

# Habits of Loving-Kindness



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**SMALL HABITS, PRACTICED OFTEN, GROW THE SEEDS  
OF A PEACEFUL LIFE**



**LISTENING**  
UNDERSTANDING



**COMPASSION**  
JOY OF BEING



**TRUE LOVE**  
NON-ATTACHMENT

This course is in 3 parts and can be completed in 3 weeks. I recommend that you complete the course in 3 weeks even though you may feel you haven't mastered the practices. The individual elements are not a progression to be completed and discarded. Each of the exercises offered here is a tool for you to use on a regular basis as fits your needs. After completing the course once, you can return to repeat the entire course more slowly, or review certain elements.

These practices can bring up uncomfortable emotions and it is wise to be prepared for this. This is a natural part of mindfulness practices as you begin to observe the things that are getting in the way of joy and peace in your life. It can be hard to let go of these things. What this course gives you is tools to recognise what is useful in your life, and what is unnecessary and perhaps even draining your energy.

There is no sense of failure or shame in this. These things you can let go of are all essential elements of you, and have at one time or another been useful tools in your life. The question is, are they useful now? Hold this question as you move through the course and give yourself permission to let go of that which does not bring you joy.

Take a moment to set a start date for this course with the knowledge that it can initially leave you feeling a little tired. This feeling will fade with time as you begin to replenish energy through the very practices that at first seemed challenging.

If you have any questions feel free to get in touch [carol@caroldoyleyoga.com](mailto:carol@caroldoyleyoga.com)

I wish you good practicing.

- Carol

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# Understanding

## THE LINE IN YOUR OWN HEART

A student recently told me how emotional they get in class. I have had several students cry in class. Sometimes after a focused meditation at the end of the practice, the class sits for 5 or 10 minutes in contemplation. (I hate to interrupt this!) Sometimes I myself cry in class when I see a student overcoming an internal struggle, or when I notice a marked change in someones breathing. These are beautiful moments of letting go.

One memorable moment was when, after I kept on one hyper-flexible student for months about engaging their core muscles, they yelled out "Oh! I found my core!"

Why these highs and lows? Doing a yoga practice with mindfulness - as we do in my classes - asks us to be acutely aware of our being in the present moment. It asks us to look at ourselves as a blank slate. That is, the sum of all of our past experiences - both good and bad - but with the pure potential to take the next step towards joy. Most of us have a lot of negative baggage that we are holding tightly to. Letting go of this is both difficult and joyous.

So, shoutout to everyone who has ever taken a deep breath and taken in the moment as it is. Peace is every breath, joy is every thought. Within each of us are the seeds of Loving Kindness, waiting to be planted and nourished.

And shoutout to everyone who has ever been kind; to everyone who has ever put aside their own prejudices to give a helping hand.

We have all done this. Each and every one of us knows how to be kind. What many of us aren't so good at is being kind to ourselves. I know I am my worst critic. I can put my whole life on hold to help out someone else. But what about the times I need to put my whole life on hold to help myself?

I have long been moved by this question from Carl Jung:

That I feed the hungry, forgive an insult, and love my enemy...these are great virtues. But what if I should discover that the poorest of the beggars



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and the most impudent of offenders are all within me, and that I stand in need of the alms of my own kindness; that I myself am the enemy who must be loved? What then?

*What then?*

Then begins the hard work of learning to love and accept ourselves without judgement.

But wait! I know intimately all of my deepest darkest parts. No-one knows my failures as well as I do. Right? Therefore I am the only one who truly understands how undeserving I really am. Seems logical. The result is that I can be brutally unkind to myself. We have all suffered the pain of unkindness, and it is no less stinging when I am the both bully and victim.

The idea that the line of good and evil cuts through the heart of every person has always fascinated me. We all walk that line, tipping towards good or evil with every thought and decision. The me that exists right now is the sum of all of my past decisions and experiences.

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That doesn't mean that I never get angry or curse at someone in my head. We don't have control over the thoughts that pop into our minds like this. Angry or negative thoughts pop up uncontrollably because there are seeds of anger planted within us. These seeds were planted in our youth, or because of certain negative experiences we have endured.

There is a *habit energy* that drives us to tend to these little anger-plantlings. However, with the practice of Loving Kindness, we can sow seeds of kindness and create a new habit energy. As we turn towards kindness again and again, we sow more and more seeds of kindness until the anger-plants are smothered and die away.

Just like green plants that give their energy back to the earth, the withered



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anger-plants have given us great experience and wisdom. With steady practice, kindness will become the habit. Imagine that: uncontrollable kind thoughts running through your head.



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# Yielding techniques

## A MOVEMENT INQUIRY

Your body functions as a whole. Each part effects the others. Even mental and emotional effort can leave you feeling physically drained. The demands of daily life can create imbalances in your movement patterns and energy levels. Have you ever found yourself clenching your jaw, or hunched over a screen with a headache, or rushing along with shallow breath and to-do list reeling through your mind? These ways of being and moving are unconscious - running on autopilot -often without realising the level of stress or tension, ignoring pain or fatigue.

These habitual movement patterns drain energy which could be better spent on other things. The result of being on autopilot like this is that we have an attitude of "forcing". That is, plough on, head down, to the rhythm of demands that are placed upon us from external sources. When we force, we stop listening and lose connection to ourselves. There are many external forces that makes us think "more is better". I wish to erase that notion from the collective consciousness! There is an inner rhythm of give and take, action and rest. Both are equally important. Action cannot happen without the energy from rest and nourishment.

Nourishment can be food for your body, but also encompasses emotional nourishment, such as social interaction, meditation, and your favourite relaxing hobbies. Emotional nourishment is time just for you, doing whatever you need to feel balanced again and ready for action. There is no right or wrong when it comes to nourishment - each person is unique. However, the method of discovering what you need to feel nourished is the same: you must practice listening deeply and respond kindly to your own needs. Yielding is the opposite of unconscious and forced movements.

Yielding is responsive and requires deep listening. To me, yielding implies softness, while forcing feels hard. That is not to say that yielding is passive. A top athlete can use an attitude of yielding to excel to great levels of performance, while also taking steps necessary to replenish energy, maintain a focused mind, and heal their body. Forcing does not allow for softness; forcing drowns out the sound of what you need to feel nourished and



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balanced. An attitude of forcing, in my experience with my own body and mind, becomes a fragile holding pattern. I felt that if I stopped forcing, if I loosed my grip, I would spin out of control.

When I began to say "no" more often I found that the people around me were happier too. They were happy that I was happy. This is because they love me and share both my joys and my struggles. It was me who underestimated them and I am sorry for that.

Overuse knocks things out of balance. In this yielding movement inquiry we will explore using just as much energy as necessary to perform a series of movements which soothe, strengthen, and stretch your body. Through deep listening you will gain understanding of your body's needs from the inside out. Smooth and gentle movement done with a feeling of pleasure creates a space. This space can hold a question. It is a seed of true love.

*You will need: A stretchy waistband and a place to stand.*



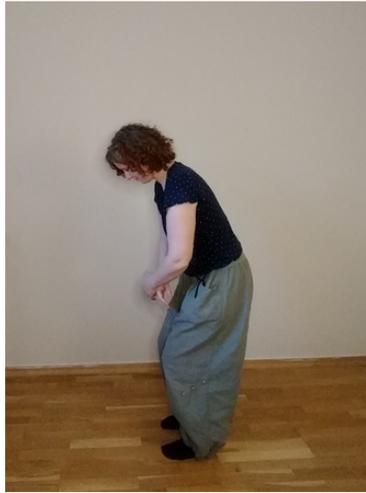
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# Deep listening

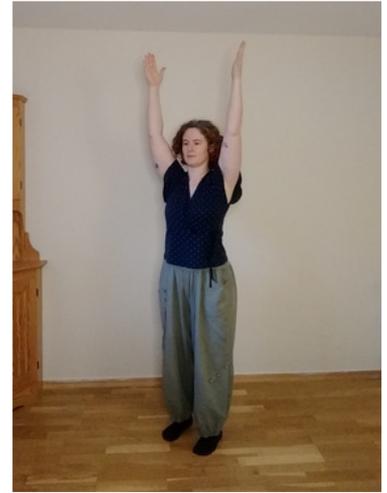
## A MOVEMENT INQUIRY



**BEGIN STANDING**  
TAKE A BREATH



**CURL IN**  
ROUNDING YOUR SPINE



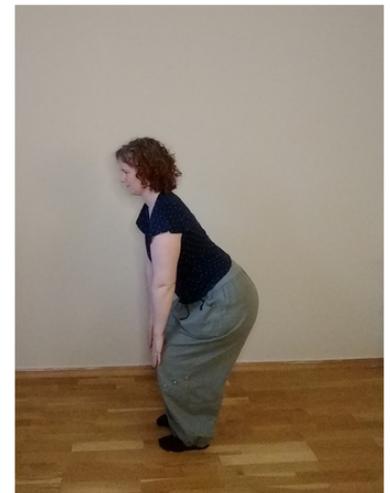
**ARM RAISE**  
TENSION FREE



**SIT IN A CHAIR**  
HANDS ON YOUR KNEES



**ARM RAISE**  
NOTICE YOUR BACK



**SIT IN A CHAIR**  
HANDS ON YOUR KNEES



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# Deep listening

## A MOVEMENT INQUIRY



**LIFT YOUR HIPS**  
KEEP YOUR SPINE NEUTRAL



**HOLD YOUR ELBOWS**  
BELLY ON YOUR LEGS



**MINI SQUAT**  
USE YOUR LEGS TO STAND



**BALANCE**  
HEEL RAISE



**END STANDING**  
TAKE A BREATH

Repeat the sequence as many times as you like, observing how your body responds with each round.

When you have finished your practice, take a moment to thank yourself for the effort you have given.



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# Simple body scan

The body scan is a great way to get a "weather reading" of your state of being. Taking this moment to check in with body, mind, and breath interrupts whatever habit you were in the middle of and acts as a reset button. It is a useful practice for when you are feeling stressed or find yourself running around on autopilot.

I start and finish each mindful movement class with a body scan.

At the start of class it functions to settle you down and prepare you for the practice, and at the end of class it functions to allow you to acknowledge changes and rest in your joy of being.

A regular practice, at least once a day, allows you to build up a picture of how you are. You will soon be able to recognise when you are feeling off kilter and take steps to soothe yourself.

## Daily practice

*Listen to the guided practice on the Habits of Loving-Kindness course page.*

1. Sit comfortably and notice the weight of your body settle down as you take a deep breath.
2. Begin at the top of your head and scan towards your toes.
3. Each time you become distracted, accept these distractions and let them go.
4. Notice the quality of your energy and anything that is comfortable or uncomfortable in your body.
5. When you have scanned all the way to your toes, shift your focus to your breathing.
6. Notice the feeling of the breath in your body.
7. Become aware of the weight of your body again before opening your eyes.



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# Joy of being

## PRACTICING KINDNESS

Imagine that you are hungry: your belly is rumbling, your mind is cloudy, and your body is feeling weak. Someone offers you food and immediately your mouth starts to water. You crave this food; you need this food to nourish body. You are so grateful for the kindness of others.

Now imagine that instead of feeling physically hungry, you feel that you are lacking essential emotional nutrients. You feel a deep weariness that cannot be remedied by sleeping late on the weekends, having a second cup of caffeine, or even treating yourself to a spa weekend. You are using up more emotional “calories” than you are taking in.

Since I began teaching yoga full time, my body has resisted with injury, fatigue, and brain fog. When all of Norway went into Covid-19 lockdown, I was quietly happy. The reality was that I was a burned out teacher. After only 3 years?! I read news of the experiences of others all around the globe. There was great suffering and my heart was breaking, but somewhere deep inside of me there was a contented sigh.

You cannot pour from an empty cup.

Imagine getting angry at your body for being hungry. Craving food is natural and we respond by eating as much food as we need to feel satisfied. Yet, we ignore cravings for restful emotional, mental, and physical nourishment. We call ourselves lazy for needing to rest. Would you call yourself a glutton for needing to eat dinner?

Two months into lockdown and the chronic tendon inflammation in my leg had significantly reduced. My chiropractor had been telling me before every (and frequent) painful shockwave therapy session that what I really needed was rest. I was running around on empty, hating the sound of my alarm clock, but ignoring my bodys cravings. Well, that’s not entirely true: I was responding to sugar cravings with gusto! Watching TV until midnight does not constitute a nourishing practice. What I needed was to create a kindness habit.



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I looked for ways to take the pressure off. I stopped asking myself what I owed other people, and began asking “what do I owe myself?”

There is a vulnerability to asking the right question. It can be difficult to feel we are allowed to ask certain things. But we must! The answers we seek are contained in the heart of the question. A nourishing, replenishing, loving-kindness practice will carry the vulnerability of your question.

It requires a great effort to see another as they are; it requires a great effort to see ourselves as we really are.

There is an energy driving this kindness. It is the same energy that drives anger and other negative emotions. The energy itself is neutral. We have the power to direct it. That is why we need to create a *habit energy* that drives us to perform kind acts. Just like we can keep anger alive, so too can we plant and nourish the seeds of loving-kindness and tend to them every day. Because kindness replenishes energy, the effect is multiplied. Anger only takes energy away from us.

Being kind to yourself, replenishing your whole being with nourishing practices, plants the seeds of true love. As these seeds grow, so too does your capacity to be kind to yourself and to others. Kindness requires us to see others as they really are – to give them what they need, not what we think they need. The more you practice kindness, the more instinctive it becomes. Just like eating is part of your day, so too are small acts of loving-kindness. Soon you will find yourself turning towards kindness without even thinking about it.



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# Constructive resting

## A RESTORATIVE INQUIRY

In this inquiry we will explore the experience of resting. There are many people who think they don't have time to rest or see rest as laziness. I was raised to believe that if I wasn't pushing all the time, then I was doing nothing. As we explored in part 1, pushing and forcing often leads to the opposite of our intention. What would it be like to yield to your need for emotional and mental rest?

What does your mind do as soon as you start to relax? Usually, it starts to remind you of how busy you are and that there is no time to stop. This is not a failure. In fact, the entire quest of the mindfulness practitioner is to learn to let these kinds of thoughts drift away without becoming engaged with them. That is why we use "objects" to focus the mind. In today's practice we will use the Centering Breath technique as the object of focus.

When doing the Constructive Rest position, described below, we use the Centering Breath to help you to stay in the moment and allow your mind and body to rest. Reassure yourself that all of the demands of your life are waiting patiently for you to finish - it is OK to let go of them for a short time. But maybe, after some time spent nourishing the seeds of loving-kindness inside yourself, you will start to feel and think differently about some of those pressures.

You will need: a place to lie down on the floor (not a bed) and optional 3 blankets/large towels.

*View the video on the Habits of Loving-kindness course page.*



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# The best 3 minutes of your day

## DAILY PRACTICE

A daily constructive rest practice is preventative and most important to do when you are feeling fine. There are many practitioners who drop their daily practice once they start to feel better. This is akin to deciding you will never wash again until you really stink. The cumulative effects of mindfulness practices in body and mind help to you meet the stresses of life with equanimity. You will find yourself better able to face stress and respond to negativity from others with effective kindness.

Mindfulness practices (including meditation) and sleep are not the same thing. Both effect the mind, nervous system, breath, and promote healing, but in different ways. Even though you might find yourself dozing off while doing a mindfulness practice, it is important to take steps to ensure you stay awake.

This practice can be done with or without a timer. You might find that yourself thinking "I can barely fit in 3 minutes", but soon end up doing a longer practice as you interrupt the flow of mental chatter and rest in your joy of being. However long you spend setting up and being in the position is not as important as being there regularly. It is better to do 1 minutes practice every day, than 30 minutes practice once a week.

You will need: a place to lie down (not a bed) and optional 3 blankets/large towels.

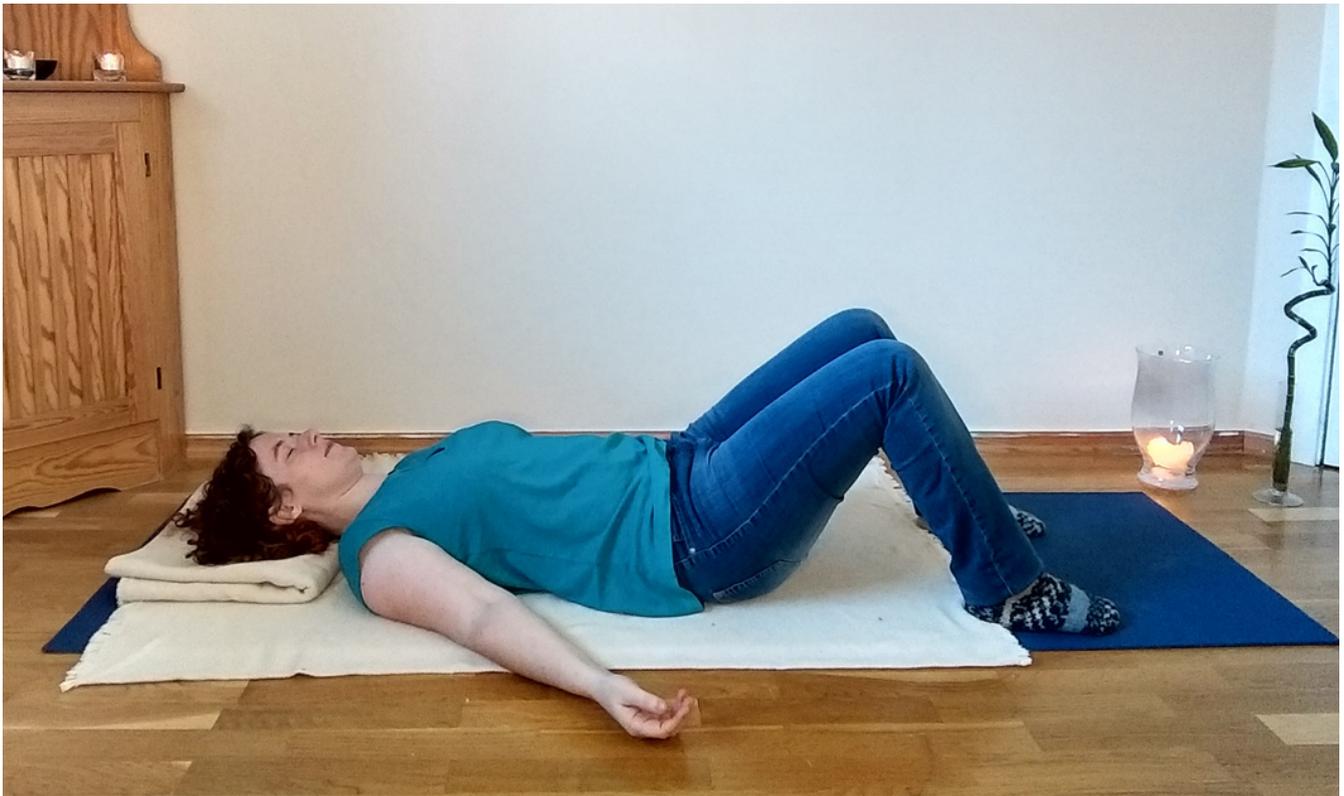
*Use the guided video or the instructions on the next two pages for your daily practice.*



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# Constructive rest

A DAILY PRACTICE OF NOT-DOING



Constructive rest position is a supportive position that allows release of tension through the neck and back, and distributes muscular tone throughout the body. This deceptively simple practice helps to reduce tension, increase ease of movement, and relieve the toxic effects of stress.

**DAILY PRACTICE OF 20 MINUTES IS RECOMMENDED, THOUGH 3 MINUTES IS A VERY GOOD PLACE TO START.**



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# IN THE POSITION

1. Settle down and take a deep breath.
2. Scan your body from top to bottom, noticing the contact points between your body and the floor.
3. Let go of tension as much as possible, becoming heavy on the floor.
4. Become aware of your breathing. Notice the feeling of breath in your body.
5. Each time you become distracted: notice, accept, and let go of the distraction.
6. You may choose to complete up to 10 rounds of Centering Breath.
7. Remain in this position until you feel the desire to move your body again, or your timer dings.
8. Slowly begin to move your body. Make sure you feel alert before going on with your day.

## CENTERING BREATH

1. Make fists with your hands in order to count the rounds.
2. Take a deep breath through your nose.
3. Open 1 finger to count the 1st round.
4. Let your breath settle down to its natural rhythm again.
5. This is 1 complete round of Centering Breath.
6. When you feel ready, begin the next round.
7. Complete up to 10 rounds.



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# True Love

## **NO WORDS, JUST FEELING**

Imagine a time when you felt safe and loved. Bring to mind the sounds, smells, and sensations of the scene. Notice what happens in your body. You are most likely feeling an openness, a spaciousness, perhaps you sat a little straighter or took a deep relaxing breath. Now imagine the opposite: a time when you felt unsafe. We can feel unsafe both physically and emotionally; it can be something as (seemingly) simple as an altercation with a hard-nosed boss, or a feeling of being misunderstood by a friend. Notice what happens in your body.

When we feel unsafe the body tends to contract. Perhaps you curled into a protective ball, or felt your shoulders tense. Has your breathing become shallow? What would you say to a friend who came to you in such distress? Can you comfort and reassure yourself with those same words, perhaps giving yourself a hug or moving around to shake off tension. The first thing that happens to me at the this point is that a little voice in my head begins to list the reasons I should stay afraid. If I engage with this voice, I am sowing seeds of anger inside of me.

A habit of loving-kindness – cultivating a habit of choosing kindness without even thinking about it – requires non-attachment. That is, letting go of our attachment to thoughts and judgements. Often our deepest love comes all in a rush, compelling us to act without even considering if the other person is somehow worthy of our love. We simply know that another person is suffering and that they need love and that we need to give love.

Can I let go of the argument raging inside my head, quieting all voices, letting go of all words, and instead feel what is happening inside my body? Once I can feel the contraction, I can take steps to make myself feel safe and open. I do not stop until I can take a deep breath and patiently observe as the next breath begins. At first it takes a great effort, but with practice it comes easier.

This is true love. The love that never tries to contain nor deny. True love



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accepts that suffering is all around. In my life I was told that suffering is because of me and that I could somehow control it. It took me a long time to see the cruelty in that. If I could just be better, then everything could be better. But there is no way of “being better”. There is no way to control suffering. The only thing we can do is change our relationship to suffering.

This is true love. The love that never tries to contain nor deny. True love accepts that suffering is all around. In my life I was told that I was the cause of all suffering and that I could somehow control it. It took me a long time to see the cruelty in that. If I could just be better, then everything could be better. But there is no way of “being better”. There is no way to control suffering. The only thing we can do is change our relationship to suffering.

I realized that there was only a cruel voice telling me lies. I had to embrace a great rage inside of me and find the question “how could you give me your suffering and then leave me all alone?” At the heart of this question is the answer. My answer. From that I created a loving-kindness mantra, or prayer:

May I recognize the seeds of loneliness that are inside of me.  
May I be able to identify the sources of cruelty in myself.  
May I be able to recognize the seeds of kindness that are inside of me and my potential to transform loneliness into deep connection.

May you recognize the seeds of loneliness that are inside of you.  
May you be able to identify the sources of cruelty in yourself.  
May you be able to recognize the seeds of kindness that are inside of you and your potential to transform loneliness into deep connection.

May they recognize the seeds of loneliness that are inside of themselves.  
May they be able to identify the sources of cruelty in themselves.  
May they be able to recognize the seeds of kindness that are inside of them and their potential to transform loneliness into deep connection.

I would like to share some poetry with you on the nature of our relationship to ourselves. I collect poems and ideas in a notebook which I often turn to when I feel disconnected and alone, my heart filled with unkindness. It comforts me to know that there are many others who feel the same way and that it is possible to embrace suffering with loving-kindness and transform into something very beautiful. The strength of the authors inspires me. By



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reading their words I tend the seeds of loving-kindness in myself and that is the first step towards true love.

### **Sitting on the Fence**

*Michael Leunig*

Come sit down beside me  
I said to myself  
And although it doesn't make sense,  
I held my own hand  
As a small sign of trust  
And together I sat on the fence.

-

Don't surrender your loneliness so quickly,  
let it cut more deep.  
Let it ferment and season you  
as few human or even divine ingredients can.  
Something missing in my heart tonight  
has made my eyes so soft  
my voice so tender  
my need of love absolutely clear.

*by Hafiz*

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### **Säg till om jag stör**

*Eeva Kilpi*

Tell me right away if I'm disturbing you  
he said as he stepped inside my door,  
and I'll leave at once.

You not only disturb me, I said,  
You shatter my entire existence.  
Welcome.



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# A wish for yourself and others

## A MEDITATION INQUIRY

Formal loving-kindness meditation is also known as metta meditation. This practice teaches us to look past the surface and let go of judgements. We wish good things for ourselves, for our loved ones, and extend this even to our enemies. By seeking to view every person as a living being who feels joy and suffering just like we do, we can experience true love. This love recognises the line dividing the heart of each one of us and asks us to accept each other. By listening deeply and with compassion we are able to offer true love. When we understand that our joy of being is only increased by offering kindness to our enemies, so can we offer ourselves the opportunity to discard that which no longer serves us and meet each moment as a blank slate.

You will need: a quiet place to sit.

*Listen to the guided meditation on the Habits of Loving-kindness course page.*

Being kind makes us happier. Kind acts create a sort of positive feedback loop between kindness and happiness.

We cannot control thoughts popping into our minds, but we can create a habit of loving-kindness so that we turn more and more towards kindness, patience, and acceptance.

This is true love: the love that never tries to contain or deny. The love that is like the warmth of the sun. And, just like the sun, true love never says "you owe me".



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# A habit of loving-kindness

## DAILY PRACTICE



Being kind makes us happier. Your daily practice is to call to mind your wish for peace and transformation in your own life, and to extend that wish to others.

We cannot control thoughts popping into our minds, but we can create a habit of loving-kindness so that we turn more and more towards kindness, patience, and acceptance.

**WRITE DOWN YOUR OWN LOVING-KINDNESS (METTA) WISH AND TAKE A MOMENT EACH DAY TO RECITE THE WORDS.**

Think of something you do every day and layer this habit onto it. For example, send out your wish while brushing your teeth, or while waiting for your morning coffee to brew.





# A habit of Loving-Kindness

**DAILY PRACTICE**

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**MAY I...**

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**MAY YOU...**

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**MAY THEY...**

