

## **Training Exercise: Kindness Meditation**

This is an exercise that can help you practice the technique of non-judgment with your thoughts.

Close your eyes or fix your gaze.

Now, first, start your mindful breathing. Just notice each in breath and each out breath. Come back to your breathing whenever you need to get centered.

Now, imagine in your mind's eye someone who you care deeply about, someone whose image naturally invites a feeling of love and caring. This may be a friend, a family member, a child, a pet, or anyone else for whom you feel caring and compassion.

When you have this person or animal in mind who is nearest to your heart, see how much you care for them. Notice what it is about them that draws you near. Notice how you hold them in your heart. Now, notice that they, too, have their own struggles in life. Notice that, at times, they, too, struggle with difficult thoughts, that they, too, get burdened by images, memories, and judgments. When that person is in this difficulty, feel how your heart naturally opens, moving toward him or her to extend comfort, to offer kindness in response to the difficulty, to meet it with compassion.

After you experience your deep caring for this person close to you, try to turn this compassion toward yourself. Take a moment and notice your own struggles. Be aware that, at times, you are visited by difficult thoughts, burdensome images, and memories. Notice your own struggle in these places. See if you can, as a choice, extend comfort to yourself in the midst of these experiences. Allow your heart to naturally open to them. Notice how you can show concern and comfort, how you can meet this difficulty with compassion.

Take a few moments and let yourself rest in this open place, this place where you greet yourself with compassion. Try this for just a few moments, allowing yourself to open up and offer compassion and kindness toward your own struggles or difficult thoughts.

(About 15 seconds of silence)

And when you are ready, open your eyes.