

## Guided Meditation: Kindness to Oneself

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**February 10, 2026**

**Keywords:** vipassanā, mettā, mindfulness, loving-kindness, goodwill, non-judgmental awareness, present moment awareness, kindness, meditation, IMC

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So good morning, welcome. And I believe we're back on the local IMC broadcast system. So hopefully everything is well with the sound and everything. So one of the really remarkable things for me is how... mindfulness, *vipassanā*, the clear showing up of attention, being here, present, can also become an act of kindness. No different than being kind. And we can see that, especially when we are with other people, when our clear mindful attention goes to listening to someone without any reactivity or judgment, to see them and look upon them clearly and be present, just to sit next to them or go for a walk with them and really be present with our attention and care, that that attention can feel kind.

That attention can feel like a gift. Even though the person might not be trying to be kind, there's something about the nature of non-reactive, non-judgmental present moment awareness when offered to someone else that is felt to be kind, felt to be connecting, felt to be connecting to the heart, to our humanity. It's a remarkable thing. And even more remarkable is when we start feeling that for ourselves, that when we can be present, mindfully sitting in meditation, at some point, that attention, that presence, non-reactive, non-judgmental, begins to feel like an act of kindness, of friendliness, of goodwill, in and of itself. And maybe the two can't be separated.

So for this morning, meditation on *mettā*, I want to try to guide you to maybe the warm spot inside of you, the tender spot or the gentle spot or the vibrating spot, place within, that might represent the center of kindness. So to assume a meditation posture and gently close your eyes and with some fuller breaths, with the inhale, connecting to yourself more fully. Like you're here for yourself, you're here to attend, to be present, to feel and sense and discover what is here for you at this particular time and place. And the deeper inhale is a way to say, here I am. Or maybe it's almost like gently knocking on the door. May I get to know you? May I come in?

And to relax on the exhale. Almost like the attention given on the inhale is welcome and reassuring. And something can relax on the exhale, in our body, mind, and heart. And to then let your breathing return to normal. And with a more or less normal breath, continue to explore, discover, connect to your inner life on the inhale. And a reassuring, relaxing. And then letting yourself sit here quietly for... a few breaths.

And then as you sit here, see if you can remember a simple but meaningful act of kindness that you received from someone. That someone, it could be a stranger, it could be someone you know well, or anything in between. But someone for whom it was uncomplicated, it was clean, it was clear, that it touched you in some important way, that someone would offer this kindness, this care, this attention. It might have been a very simple ordinary thing they did, but the way they did it touched you, moved you. Maybe you remember the event, how they were with you. Maybe you remember the effect it had on you.

Nothing was expected of you in return. It was a freely given act of kindness, of support, of care, of attention. And can you remember what it touched inside of you? Was there some source inside, some place that your heart smiled, something relaxed, something was inspired and gladdened? Somehow it was maybe a little uplifting. And where inside of you might be a place that is the center or the most... obvious place that you were touched, moved, inspired, gladdened by this act of kindness.

Do you remember what it felt like there? Was there a softening, a gentling? Was something of the person's kindness to you transferred to you, so that you were a little bit more disposed to be kind yourself in return? Maybe grateful, friendly, friendly, to be seen and related to in kindness. And something about you accepted it, allowed it to move you, to touch you. In the way that you were touched, the way that you were moved or uplifted, if there's a place inside your body that you associate with that, might that be the source of your own ability to be kind?

That you recognize the kindness in someone else means that your system, your body, mind, heart, knows what kindness is. Your whole, your being has the capacity to take in, resonate, because you know what it is. And now, in the way that you, someone was kind to you, can you sit here with kindness to yourself, as if you can look upon yourself in the same way. Gently, simply, without judgment, reactivity. Let the warmth, the care, the kindness that you're capable of resonate through your body. With every inhale, kindness, with every exhale, kindness, with the breathing moving through, breathing with the place of warmth, tenderness, uplift, smile, where you can offer kindness, kind attention to yourself.

Letting go of your thoughts, your thinking, and replacing thinking with a single thought, a

single word, on the in-breath, kindness, on the exhale, kindness, or love, or *mettā*, with every breath. Inhale, exhale, kindness, or perhaps a simpler word that can do the same. The word yes. And as we come to the end of the sitting, to offer words of goodwill to yourself, to reach deep inside of yourself, to a source within, to a place within that is not interfering, with a simple ordinary goodness, goodwill that includes yourself. And to use these words to speak that inner goodwill.

And if you want, you can repeat silently after me. May I be happy. May I be safe. May I be peaceful. May I be awake.

And then again, this time as you say the last word, imagine that it's like being broadcast from an antenna deep within you. The waves traveling outward through your body and beyond. In a reassuring way, may I be happy, may I be safe, may I be peaceful, may I be awake, and to allow this signal, this wave, glow of kindness spread beyond you out into your world. Maybe with the final word, being the offering that's sent forth, may all beings be happy, may all beings be safe, may all beings be peaceful. May all beings be awake. And may the benefits of this practice that we do serve for the welfare and happiness of all beings. May we contribute to this. Thank you.