

Note to reader: This podcast takes you through a meditation process. Every new paragraph indicates a new activity, so please feel free to go through it at your own pace.

[Intro Music]

Dr. Oren Shibi: Hello everyone! I'm doctor Oren Shibi, I'm a university psychologist here at CAPS. Today I'd like to guide you through a loving kindness meditation. Loving kindness meditation is about focusing our attention on our emotions of love, compassion, kindness, and about sending it to others and ourselves and the universe regardless of whether we've earned it or we deserve it. Simply sending out those emotions to all living things. One of the amazing things about loving kindness meditation is that we know with today's science, we can literally rewire our brains. There's a term called neuroplasticity which essentially means we can create new connections in our minds and our brains. And so, as a metaphor, if you see the beautiful grass that is around campus, in certain places you have students cutting through and taking a shortcut. Over time, if students continue to take that shortcut, the shortcut becomes a nice defined path. If students continue down that path, it becomes well-defined, almost like a road. Let's say the university cracks down on it and says: "Alright no more shortcuts," what would happen? Grass will grow over and that road will no longer be there. Our mind works similarly, so when we harbor emotions of resentment, or anger, we create these connections in our minds, and these become well-defined paths. Let's say we practice love and kindness every single day. We can weaken those paths that are connected to those more negative or painful emotions, and we can strengthen paths to emotions of compassion, kindness, and love.

So we're gonna start off today with sitting in a comfortable position. Either on a meditation cushion or chair and then just kind of get a sense of your feet touching the floor and just get a sense of the points of contact of your body with the chair. And if you feel comfortable doing so, I invite you to close your eyes. Otherwise, you're welcome to just pick a point in the room and allow your gaze to go unfocused. We're going to begin by just paying our attention to the sensations of breathing. You're going to be focusing your attention to the area below your nostrils and above your lip; so that when you're breathing in you notice that you're breathing in, and when you're breathing out on the exhalation you notice that you're breathing out. So right now there is no need to manipulate or control the breath in anyway, simply allow it to come and go freely. Simply surfing the wave of a breathe coming and going, it's normal and natural for there to be all kinds of chatter in the mind. The mind wants to plan, wants to rehash the past, as soon as you notice that it's happening, very gently and without any judgement, simply bring your attention back to bring us back to the breath. Using the breath as an anchor to bring us back to the present. Giving yourself permission for the next two minutes to just live one inhalation and one exhalation at a time.

See if you can notice the subtle sensations in the body as you breathe in and expand and as you exhale and contract. Maybe noticing the rise of the abdomen with the inhalation and a fall on the exhalation. Maybe noticing the rib cage expanding as you breathe in and falling as you breathe out. And throughout this meditation, if you become distracted, that's okay. Simply notice where your mind is being pulled and then bring your attention back to the breath. See if you can pay attention to the touch of the breath also the spaces between the in breath and out breath. Noticing what it feels like when the lungs are full of air, right before you're about to exhale, and then, what does it feel like at the bottom of the breath, when the lungs are empty right before you're about to inhale.

I would like for you to pay attention to your heart's center, and imagine yourself breathing into your heart's center, breathing into the chest area. I would like for you to call your attention to an image of you as a child, imagine yourself vividly sitting in front of you. And as you hold that image of yourself I would like for you to silently say to yourself: "May I be safe from inner and outer dangers. May I be well in body and in mind. May I be happy, joyous, and live with ease. May I love and accept myself as I am and have people in my life that love me as I am". Again, bringing your awareness to your heart's center, noticing the breath coming and going. Bringing your attention to cultivating emotions of compassion and happiness.

You will now call an image to your mind's eye of someone who is really easy to love, someone that you can send loving kindness without any effort. This can be a parent, pet, child, a mentor, a spiritual figure; and vividly holding that image of this person in front of you silently repeat the following phrases to yourself: "May you be safe from inner and outer dangers. May you be well in body and in mind. May you be happy, joyous, and calm. May you love and accept yourself as you are and have people in your life that love and accept you as you are." Bringing your attention back to your heart's center, noticing your breath coming and going in the body.

Now calling your attention to someone neutral, someone you needn't necessarily have loving feelings for, nor any negative or resentment towards and vividly holding the image of this neutral person in front of you, silently repeat the following phrases to yourself: "May you be safe from inner and outer dangers. May you be well in body and in mind. May you be happy, joyous, calm, and live with ease. May you have people in your life that love and accept you as you are and may you love and accept yourself as you are." Now bring your attention back to your breath, back to the heart's center.

And next, I would like you to call your attention in your mind's eye to someone you may harbor ill feelings for, maybe you're holding a grudge, or resentment. Maybe this is someone you have a difficult relationship with. Maybe this is someone that has hurt you. And holding this image of this person, I'd like you to silently repeat the following phrases: "May you be safe from inner and outer dangers. May you be well in body and in mind. May you be happy, live with ease, feel calm, and joyous. May you have people that love and accept as you are." Allow the feelings of warmth, loving kindness, and compassion to rise sensing them in your body, bringing your attention to the heart's center and back to the breath wherever you sense it most predominantly in this moment.

And next, we are going to send loving kindness to all living beings at the FIU community, silently repeat the following phrases to yourself: "May all beings at the FIU community be safe. May all beings be well. May all beings be happy. May all beings love and accept themselves as they are and have those in their lives that love and accept them as they are." Again, bring your attention to your heart's center and your breath. Notice any differences in the sensations and feelings if any. Take a moment to congratulate yourself for this moment of mindful practice and loving kindness meditation; knowing that it's a gift of love towards yourself and others. When you're ready, and in your own time, you can slowly allow movement back into your body.

It was an honor and privilege to guide you through this loving kindness meditation. If you enjoy this podcast, I would like to share with you that we have plenty of mindfulness resources at CAPS that you can check out through our website or through coming in for services. We have mindfulness based workshops, groups, and we have clinicians that offer what's considered third wave psychotherapy, which are mindfulness based psychotherapy and they all integrate these mindfulness practices into traditional western psychotherapy. So, if you're curious or want to learn more, please reach out to us. Thank you!