

**FIVE
STAGES**

Metta Bhavana meditation—AN OUTLINE

**STAGE
ONE**

Yourself

Start by becoming aware of how you are feeling and introducing a friendly and supportive attitude to your actual experience. Cultivate an awareness of your existing sense of well-wishing and allow this to expand.

**STAGE
TWO**

Friend

Bring a close friend to mind and wish them well. The Buddhist tradition suggests that you choose a friend that is—

About the same age as you; not someone to whom you feel sexually attracted; someone alive not dead; someone of the same sex.

All the above keeps the practice as simple as possible—you are trying to choose someone *like* you.

**STAGE
THREE**

'Neutral' person

This needs to be someone you see fairly often (such as someone you work with) but for whom you do not have particular feelings one way or another.

**STAGE
FOUR**

'Difficult' person

This is someone you dislike—either at the moment or in general. It includes someone you get irritated by or find annoying. Buddhist tradition suggests that you do not choose someone whom you really loathe and you choose someone you actually know (not a public figure).

**STAGE
FIVE**

All four people, then all beings

Bring all four people together—yourself, your friend, the neutral and difficult persons—and imagine feeling metta equally for all four.

Then cultivate loving kindness for all beings. There are many ways to do this. You might imaginatively move outwards geographically from where you are now, to the surrounding suburb and so on until you include the whole world. Or you might think in terms of the states of mind that surround us (eg happy, unhappy etc)...

Metta Bhavana PRACTICE TIPS

“Feeling metta for oneself is often simply a question of dropping the habit of self-criticism and allowing the objective reality of the situation to arise. Whatever you have done, however great your failings, the honest intention to develop metta towards yourself and all living beings can be a source of happiness in itself.”

SANGHARAKSHITA FROM *LIVING WITH KINDNESS*

There are a number of creative approaches to this practice that may help you generate metta.

Affirmation. Gently repeating phrases of well-wishing—

“May they be happy, may they be well, may their life be filled with joy, be fulfilling and meaningful.”

Appreciation. Finding something you already appreciate and placing your attention on this already existing appreciation. For example, start by appreciating a beautiful quality of someone you admire and then allow this to flow into a more general appreciation.

Memory. Explore the emotional tone of positive memories, such as times when you or others were at their best.

Imagination. Imagine metta as rays of warm sunshine falling on people, or imagine yourself in a tranquil landscape, or imagine people smiling.

Inspiration. Reflect on objects and people that inspire you

Exploration. Bring awareness to positive qualities that already exist within your experience, such as kindness or contentment, and put energy into developing them.

Attention. Be more aware of physical sensations, such as opening around the heart and warmth, a release of tension, which may bring a sense of ease and contentment.