



## Loving-Kindness

*Metta is a Pali (the language the Buddha spoke) word that most teachers translate as Loving-Kindness. In Sharon Salzberg's book of the same name, she translates it as "gentle friendliness."*

### I. Do I really need a love practice?

When we first begin practicing loving-kindness, or *metta*, it can feel like a rote exercise with an overbearing structure, like some kind of complicated to-do list.

1. First, we learn four or five wishes, or blessings (depending on the teacher)

*May you be safe and protected from harm*

*May you discover happiness and peace*

*May your mind and body be healthy and strong*

*May you find ease and grace*

*May you be free from suffering and the causes of suffering*

2. Then we say these blessings:

- first to myself
- then to my benefactor
- then to my friends and/or family members and/ or work colleagues as a group
- then to a neutral person
- then to an enemy
- and finally we were to bless all beings

### Does this actually work?

We might wonder, why these words, why in this order? What is neutral? No, I am not going to bless my enemy! And who or what are all beings? How do I get in contact with that? Our monkey minds usually jump from thought to thought as we recite the blessings. It can feel complicated, forced and inauthentic.

### Best Practices to Begin, and sustain, a *Metta* Practice

Beginning a practice like *metta* can be quite potent on a silent retreat with no music, media, reading, journaling or talking. No matter how forced or complicated, loving-kindness is actually something to *do* while we sit quietly on a cushion with no distractions.

It can also be very helpful during the start of a practice to meet with a teacher such as [Sharon Salzberg](#) one of the founders of IMS (Insight Meditation Society). When Gina met with Sharon during a retreat, she very gently spoke as a master does to a novice: *I understand how you could feel that way and give it time. I promise you will see changes in your life. They won't be grand but you will see a shift.* Gina had to admit to herself that even in the few days she had started the practice, with all of her grumpiness, her heart was opening.

## II. The Answer to “Do I really need a love practice?”

**Yes, a resounding yes.**

Within Loving-Kindness most of us find a stance for social justice, creating a sustainable life and an overall experience of living a peaceful life. Even without a steady, regularly-timed meditation practice, when we sprinkle in *metta* wishes wherever we can, the benefits resound.

### Benefits of Loving-Kindness

- Connecting to a gentle friend within (as writes Sharon Salzberg)
- Finding a gentleness for ourselves through times of transitions
- A softening of our judgments toward people who annoy us; this small opening allows us to see each person's humanity more clearly
- A calm serenity in the face of unfortunate circumstances, like when “bad things happen to good people” – wallet being stolen, freak car accidents, health crisis
- Finding an easier stance with difficult emotions or bodily sensations, such as pain
- A willingness to be transparent about hard feelings, challenging requests, everything

### Are Sufficiency and Loving-Kindness linked?

Love is what we call the ultimate *Tool of Sufficiency*. It is also one of the seven insights for an awakened organization. So how does this teaching of Loving-Kindness fit into the organizational framework laid out by the seven insights of building and conducting business inside of sufficiency?

***The inquiry into love as the ultimate tool and insight for individuals and organizations is supported by the practice of metta to cultivate that love.***

**The ultimate source of sufficiency now has a companion daily practice** to help us cultivate the truth of love for ourselves, our organizations and the world. We experience that as we invest in the practice of *metta*, the *Weapons of Scarcity* are stopped in their tracks. *Metta* does not destroy anything. It is inclusive, like sufficiency. So scarcity does not die or disappear, but it is prevented from ruling our thoughts, feelings and actions allowing our attention to flourish in the warm bath of love.

**Bringing love as a practice** to ourselves, our benefactor, our work colleagues, friends and family as well as neutral parties, enemies and all beings has brought joy, happiness and ease to our personal and professional journeys. We have appreciation and discernment for our work in exquisite sufficiency, and have more love and connection in our hearts for all beings.

### III. Loving our Enemies

We are encouraged to go easy when we start sending *metta* to an enemy. It's helpful to begin with family member or friend we may have some friction with, and then, as your practice grows, introduce people who annoy or irritate you. It is fun to start to notice a subtle shift about these folks; they don't seem quite so annoying anymore!

#### Melting a frozen heart

On the tenth anniversary of September 11th, Gina woke up agitated and found meditation particularly difficult that morning. She quickly realized the world could use a little more love on this day and started with her sister, a direct survivor of the attacks on the World Trade Center. When it was time to send Loving-Kindness to her enemy, her mind immediately went to the hijackers. She felt aversion rise up in her body for a moment and yet was committed to have this new practice be a source of healing on this day. So, she sent *metta* to the hijackers: "may you be safe, may you be happy," and so on. As she recited the wishes, she felt a melting in her heart, "a piece of my heart that had been frozen for ten years had softened and started to melt."

#### Love for all beings

Gina reflected: *"I thought of the hijackers' families, the children they had left behind, the communities that trained them, the people who fed and housed them, the circumstances that brought them to that moment of destruction, the system and context that produced such terror and horror. I finished the metta practice with my wishes for all beings. In that moment I began to understand what it meant to be connected to all beings. Each and every person, animal or living entity seen or unseen, regardless of crimes committed, perceived value of that being or even their political persuasion."*

#### Love Thy Enemy: An Inventory

- Who is your enemy(ies)?
- What individuals, organizations, sports teams, political movements or social institutions are you disgusted or frustrated with?
- Who or what are you turning away from that could be included in a Loving-Kindness practice?

#### Inquiry and Reflection

- Can I start a love practice today?
- Am I willing to send love to the people who have made an impact in my life?
- Can I embrace something new today regardless of my feelings about it?
- How well can I love myself today?

#### Being committed to love

With this practice we find we are just a little softer, a little calmer, less judgmental and experiencing compassion not from a place of pity or worry but as a lived experience of balance and connection.

Please join us in this Loving-Kindness practice. If you are interested to connect about it or learn how to do it send us a note to [enough@sevenstonesleadership.com](mailto:enough@sevenstonesleadership.com).