

JOURNAL REFLECTION

Personal Phrases of Loving Kindness

The Loving Kindness Meditation focuses on cultivating a sense of good will to self and others through the repetition of specific words and phrases. By concentrating our attention on these phrases, we can both calm the mind in the moment and practice a lasting attitude of love and kindness towards ourselves and those around us. Traditional phrases for this meditation include offering safety, peace, freedom, and happiness, positive intentions that have been passed down through this practice for thousands of years.

Yet due to this lengthy lineage, these general wishes can sometimes be difficult for individuals practicing today to connect with. To receive the full benefits of this meditation, it can help to create your own personal phrases of loving kindness that are more authentic and true reflections of your own experience.

Journal Prompts:

Creating your own phrases for a Loving Kindness Meditation starts by answering the question most related to kindness and compassion—"What do I need?"

In the lines below, take a moment to reflect upon the three questions related to the central theme of: *What do I need? What do I truly need?* For a little guidance, you may think about what helps your day feel complete. As you write, try to let your answers reflect universal human needs. Examples include the need to be accepted, validated, seen, heard, protected, loved, known, cherished, connected, or respected. Other needs include health, growth, freedom, humor, integrity, or safety to name a few.

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1. What do I need? What do I truly need?

2. What do I need to hear? What do I need to hear from others? What do I need to hear from myself?

3. What do I need to know for certain? What do I need to know is true?

Putting Your Phrases to Use

Now, take a moment to look back on what you wrote. Does anything stand out to you? Do any common themes or threads show up within your answers? You may even circle or highlight the words and phrases in your writing that really speak to you and grab your attention.

To create your own phrases of loving kindness, you can reframe the words you wrote into wishes of good will for yourself. Some examples of this may look like:

- The need for others to listen when I speak — May I be heard. May I know respect.
- The need to hear “You’ve done great work today” — May I know I am capable. May I know I am enough just as I am.
- The need to know love — May I be loveable. May I know I belong.

Try reframing your journal responses and creating your own phrases of loving kindness below:

As you go about your day, practice saying your phrases to yourself. You can try this during natural pauses, such as washing your hands or sitting down to lunch, or even during difficult situations, such as when disagreeing with a co-worker or caring for a patient who is suffering. Notice how it feels to offer these words of kindness and love to yourself. What is it like in the breath? What is it like in the body when you speak these intentions of good will?

And as you do this, remember that these phrases are wishes. They represent intentions that we are actively working on cultivating within ourselves and our experience. As such, we may not have these specific needs met in our lives yet. So, we pause to offer ourselves the compassionate response and soothing reassurance that one day we will.