

# Loving Kindness

The meditation of loving kindness is a technique in which we focus on a quality, namely that of compassion, rather than on an object or an action. There are many different variations.

For example, we can inwardly speak positive affirmations, in which we wish for security, safety, contentment, health, etc. for ourselves and others. In class we have used an example from the book *Persönlichkeit und Präsenz. Achtsamkeit im Lehrerberuf* [Personality and Presence. Mindfulness in the teaching profession] by the mindfulness trainer Vera Kaltwasser:

## For me personally

May I be safe and secure and free from internal and external distress.

May I be happy and content.

May I be healthy and whole.

May I experience the ease of well-being.

## For other people

May this person be safe and secure and free from internal and external distress.

May they be happy and content.

May they be healthy and whole.

May they experience the ease of well-being.\*<sup>1</sup>

We can speak the affirmations inwardly, but we can also repeat single words or pass on the feeling that the respective words trigger in us. It is important that we engage with the affirmation in the right way.

## Visualizing goodwill and compassion – for yourself and for others

When we do the Metta meditation for others, we have the choice of limiting ourselves to a few close people or involving a larger group of people. We can think of people we like very much, such as partners, parents, siblings, friends etc. But also people we know but do not have a direct personal relationship with, for example the bus driver, the lady at the checkout in the supermarket, people in the subway, at university, etc. Or we can also think of people we don't like, who sometimes annoy us or with whom we have arguments.

In a Metta meditation, we can also effectively visualize that we pour a whole bucket filled with loving kindness over ourselves or someone else. This form of loving kindness is also helpful to connect with people who are far away from us, for example when relatives or friends are in a difficult situation or are ill, and with whom we'd like to be.

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It is not necessarily easy to do the meditation of loving kindness for people we don't really like. The motivation of pouring out the bucket first requires that we wish the person in question well. At the same time, this also requires us to confront our own preconception that we don't like this person. We can solve this conflict by changing our attitude towards the person: perhaps this person didn't mean it that way and is perhaps currently stressed out? Maybe the situation was to blame for the person's behaviour? Or maybe I myself overreacted?

The ability to adopt different perspectives in such a situation helps us to be more calm in life and less upset. However, the variant in which one sends understanding and loving kindness to annoying people poses a slight risk: for those who already by nature have a lot of compassion for others, and tend to neglect themselves in realizing this, the exercise doesn't require one to give even more – to exhibit even more understanding. In this case it's better that one learns to appreciate and protect oneself more, and pour a bucket of loving kindness over oneself more often.

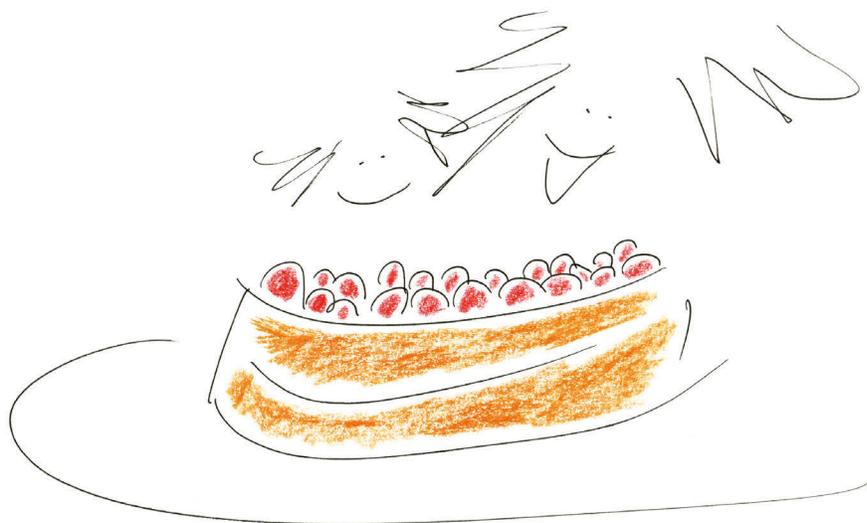
Pour out a bucket of loving kindness.



## Anger

It's normal to sometimes be annoyed, upset or angry. Of course, we should also give ourselves room to vent our anger, rather than internally suppressing our worries, anger and annoyance.

While we're on the topic of anger: I remember a student who reported in her journal that her mother had baked a delicious raspberry cake. Two pieces were left for the next day, one for the student and one for her little sister. When the student returned home in the evening after a long day at university, quite exhausted and eager to enjoy her piece of raspberry cake, she found out that her sister had eaten both pieces! In her meditation journal, she wrote, "In this case, even loving kindness doesn't help any more." But, that



Raspberry cake,  
sisters and  
a happy ending.

evening she tried the practice of loving kindness after all, sending some to her little sister. This doesn't mean that she "forgave" her little sister, but the student tried to rise above it and was even able to fall asleep reasonably relaxed.

The story continues, and has a happy ending. Two days later, out of compassion, the little sister baked a raspberry cake herself to share with her big sister and her mother.

## Connectedness with all that exists

Another variant of loving kindness emphasizes not only the connection with other people, but also with animals, plants and other living beings on earth. The radius can be extended to include places, cities, countries, continents and the earth as well as planets and stars or even the entire universe.

### An exercise that we used in class goes like this:

**"Imagine a feeling of deep inner well-being and satisfaction. Perhaps you remember a particularly beautiful situation from your life. Immerse yourself now in this feeling. Once you have established a good connection to the feeling, expand it in space. In doing so, visualize that the people and other living beings who are in the same room are also enveloped by this feeling."**

You can expand this exercise by extending the benevolent feeling even further: to the house or institution where the room is located. Or perhaps you could sit in the park and gradually expand the radius so that it eventually encompasses the entire park.

*All of spiritual practice is a matter of relationship:  
to ourselves, to others, to life's situations.  
We can relate with a spirit of wisdom, compassion,  
and flexibility, or we can meet life with fear, aggression,  
and delusion. Whether we like it or not, we are always  
in relationship, always interconnected.*

Jack Kornfield

## The unity of humanity

Another variant is to imagine people in other places, cities, countries, continents, who, just like you, go about their daily lives. Perhaps you have acquaintances in another country, whom you can have in mind when you visualize a certain area of expansion. Or you visualize the images that you know from the media. Although people are different and individual, we also have a lot in common. People take care of their families, play with their children, love soccer or are enthusiastic about other sports, enjoy being with friends, work to earn a living. All people want to be happy. Some have decent living conditions, others very challenging ones. By visualizing connectedness and pouring out well-being and love, we can experience the fundamental unity of humanity.

## Cells, stars, universe

Including the universe as the object of our practice can have a profound effect on our sense of inner peace and security. When we think of the fact that there are billions of stars in the Milky Way, it's simply an inconceivable dimension. And in considering that our bodies are made up of trillions of cells, we are reminded that we're part of a larger whole.

There are many forms of Loving Kindness and Metta meditations, available through books, on CD, through the internet – it's best to just try them out and find what best suits you. Or invent your own form. The essence lies in the feeling of benevolence that is conveyed.

## Primary literature used for the lessons

Kornfield, Jack (2008). *The Art of Forgiveness, Lovingkindness, and Peace*. New York: Bantam Dell.

Kornfield, Jack (1993). *A Path with Heart. A Guide Through the Perils and Promises of Spiritual Life*. New York: Bantam Books.

Ricard, Matthieu (2010). *The Art of Meditation*. London: Atlantic Books.

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<sup>1</sup> Kaltwasser 2010, p. 87 ff. [Author's translation]. Reprinted with kind permission of Beltz Verlag and author.

# Journal Notes

## Loving Kindness

**A. B.**

**Time: 3:45-3:52 p.m. (7 min)**

**Place: waiting room (sitting)**

**Method: loving kindness**

**Tools: Teaching Studies Research\* text =**

**Tools: LSF\*-text "loving kindness"**

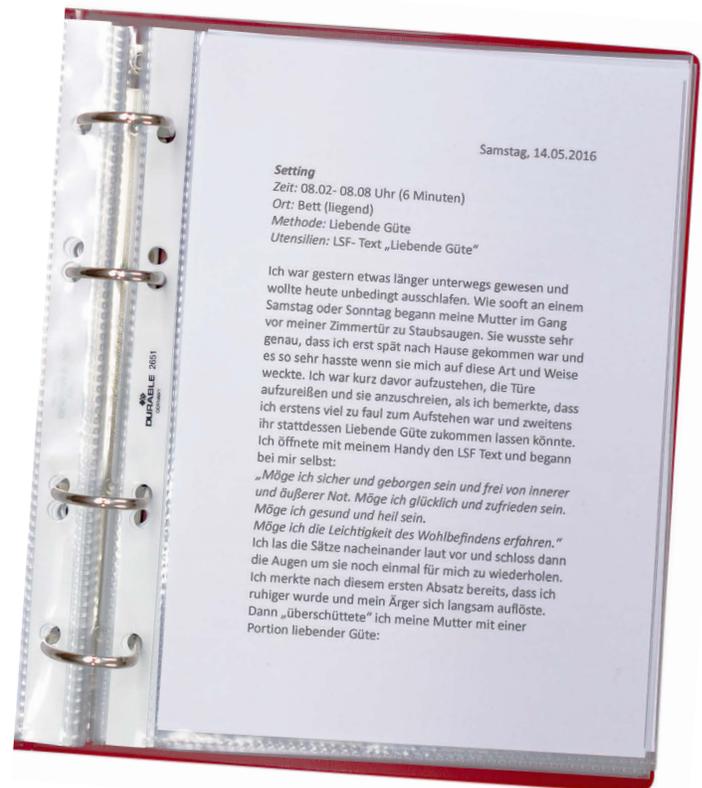
I had an appointment with the doctor at 3:30 p.m. The receptionist first sent me to the waiting room which was rather full. Next to me sat an elderly man who was constantly coughing and sneezing in my direction without putting his hand over his mouth. Every now and then I got a few drops of his spit in my face. Since I'm ill, I already wasn't in a very good mood today. I turned slightly away from the man to continue reading my book in peace.

Shortly after me, two more patients entered the waiting room. Both were called into the treatment rooms before me, although I had an appointment that was clearly ahead of them. Due to the volume of a couple's conversation in another corner of the waiting room, I could hardly concentrate on reading. I noticed that I was becoming increasingly angry and dissatisfied with the situation. The man who spat at me, the patients who came before me, and the couple's loud conversation were too much for me.

I was on the verge of rescheduling my appointment when I remembered our seminar session today where we had discussed the technique of "loving kindness". With my cell phone I downloaded the file from the LSF. I read the sentences to myself one by one, and then repeated them with my eyes closed. So I tipped a bucket of loving kindness over the man sitting next to me, over the couple, over the other patients and over the receptionist. I noticed how my anger decreased after the exercises and I felt more balanced and resilient. I even gave the newly arriving patients a smile and a cheerful "Grüß Gott".

I realized that aggression in this situation would not have been helpful at all. For me, the exercise worked very well and at the same time shortened the waiting time..

\* LSF – the university portal for students, guests, teachers and employees – LMU Munich



**Sunday, 5/14/16**

**Time: 8:02-8:08 a.m. (6 min)**

**Place: bed (lying down)**

**Method: loving kindness**

**Tools: LSF\*-text "loving kindness"**

I was up really late last night, so I really wanted to sleep in this morning. As it's often the case on a Saturday or Sunday, my mother began vacuuming the corridor in front of the door to my room. She knew very well that I'd come home late and hated it so much when she woke me up this way. I was just about to get up, rip open the door and yell at her when I realized that, firstly, I was too lazy to get up and, secondly, I could just send her loving kindness instead.

I opened the LSF text with my cell phone and started saying to myself:

"May I be safe and secure and free from internal and external distress. May I be happy and content. May I be healthy and whole. May I experience the lightness of well-being."

I read the sentences aloud one after the other and then closed my eyes to repeat them again to myself. After this first paragraph I already noticed that I became calmer and my anger slowly dissolved. Then I "showered" my mother with a dose of loving kindness.

Metta "Liebende Güte"

22:40 Uhr

Wo: im Bett, vor dem Einschlafen

Zunächst habe ich die Übung bei mir durchgeführt. Im Anschluss wand ich die Übung bei einer älteren Freundin, <sup>mit</sup> der ich keinen Kontakt mehr habe, an. Vor der Übung empfand ich "negative" Gefühle gegenüber ihr, weil ich ihr vor zwei Jahren 100€ geliehen habe da sie ~~es~~ in Not war. Gedanken kamen auf und wollten sie „verfluchen“, weil sie sie mir bis jetzt nicht zurückgegeben hat obwohl sie ständig auf Reisen ist und diese 100€ locker besitzt. Mir ist die Liebende Güte Übung eingefallen und hatte das Bedürfnis anders zu reagieren, als sonst bisher. Immerhin bringt es mir nur „negative“ Gefühle für mich und das bringt nichts. Während der Übung war es etwas komisch, ihr den Güteeimer über zu schütten, da ich das Geld schon zurückhaben möchte, jedoch auch sehr schön, da ihre Person selbst aus weitaus mehr „besteht“ als nur mir das Geld nicht zu geben. Deswegen möchte ich nicht sie im Ganzen „verfluchen“ oder kritisieren. Im Gegenteil, der Gedanke, ihr trotzdem etwas gutes zu wünschen, ist sehr schön.

Donnerstag, 9.5.2019

Körper ruhig & friedvoll / Geist ruhig & friedvoll  
17:30 Uhr ca. 10-15 Minuten  
beim Zahnarzt

Da ich aufgeregt und etwas ängstlich beim Zahnarzt bin und eine Untersuchung bzgl. eines Eingriffs mit Spritze bevorsteht habe ich die Zeit im Wartezimmer und auf dem Behandlungsstuhl genutzt um mich mit der Atemtechnik zu beruhigen. Zunächst habe ich mehrere Minuten meinen Körper beim Ein- und Ausatmen berührt. Im Anschluss meinen Geist. Zu Beginn war es sehr schwierig, da ich immer wieder Bilder von Spritzen etc. vor mir hatte und während dem Warten auf dem Behandlungsstuhl die Werkzeuge liegen gesehen habe. Mit der Zeit wurde es jedoch besser. Ich konnte mich mit viel Mühe auf meinen Atem konzentrieren und den Gedankenstrudel verlassen. Unsicher war ich trotzdem, jedoch deutlich weniger. Zumal die eigentliche Behandlung erst in einem halben Jahr sein wird. Zuvor werde ich mit Sicherheit meditieren!

**C. W.****Metta, loving kindness****10:40 p.m.****Where: in bed, before falling asleep**

At first I did the exercise by myself. Then I applied the exercise to an older friend with whom I have no contact anymore. Before doing the exercise I had felt "negative" feelings towards her because I lent her 100 euros two years ago as she was in need. Thoughts came up and I wanted to "curse" her because she hasn't yet paid me back, although she's always travelling and she clearly has this 100 euros.

The loving kindness exercise came to my mind and I felt the need to respond differently than before. After all, it only promotes "negative" feelings, and that's not helpful. During the exercise, it was a bit strange to pour the "bucket of goodness" over her, since I really want the money back. On the other hand, [it also felt] very nice, because there is much more to her character than just her not having returned the money. So I don't want to "curse" or criticize her on the whole. Instead, it's a very beautiful thought to wish her something good anyway.

**E. B.**

[This is] a favorite exercise for when I'm angry. Especially when I feel that someone has been really unfair to me or I feel humiliated or excluded, this exercise is so far the only coping strategy I have. When I am "at peace" with myself again, I can forgive and things don't have so much to do with me anymore, and I can take back my ego.

**H. K.****Saturday, 6/29/13, 7:30 a.m.**

Since I was awake so early but didn't want to get up yet, I decided to perform loving kindness. I could quite quickly put aside my negative thoughts, self-reproaches and doubts and give the other people and myself something so beautiful, and wish them a good day. Afterwards I could fall asleep again, relaxed and calm.

**P. S.****Sunday, 11/26/16, at my home****approx. 7 min****Method: loving kindness**

On Sunday I decided to finish out the week with a meditation of loving-kindness. I like this form very much and I was able to really relax.

### Liebende Güte

Eine Lieblingsübung, wenn ich wütend bin. Gerade wenn ich das Gefühl habe, dass jemand richtig unfair zu mir war oder ich mich erniedrigt oder ausgeschlossen fühle, ist diese Übung bis jetzt auch die einzige Bewältigungsstrategie, die ich habe. Wenn ich dann mit mir selbst wieder im "Leeren" bin, kann ich erreichen was die Dinge haben nicht mehr so viel mit mir zu tun und ich kann mein Ego zurücknehmen.

As an example of a loving person, I've chosen my mom. Since she had her birthday only recently and she does so much good for our family (especially spoiling me with delicious food, doing laundry when I'm sometimes home again on weekends), she really deserves the positive thoughts.

As a neutral person, the man from the Munich Student Union who arranged an apartment for me at the Olympic Center spontaneously came to mind. I'm really very grateful to him.

And for a second loving person, I chose my Latin tutor. She had a school assignment this week and so I thought about her a lot. Hopefully my warm words helped her to master her exam in a relaxed way and without much fear, and to do her best (hopefully a good result will come out of it).

**Wednesday, 12/14/16, about 10 min**

### **Apartment Munich**

### **Method: loving kindness**

I dared to do loving kindness again today because I was really very upset towards someone today. I didn't think about loving kindness right away at that moment, but when I went home and reviewed my day, I had to do it. On my way to the university today, I was in a real hurry and had to first do some shopping at the supermarket. As there was an older woman in front of me at the check-out and she put her items very slowly into the cart after paying, while she also spoke very animatedly to the saleswoman, I missed my subway train and had to wait 10 minutes. Because of a delay, I barely made it to class on time and was already quite stressed by then.

At home, after some time had passed, I then sent warm thoughts to the person, which was really not easy for me. Maybe next time I'll just have to leave earlier and plan for such "incidents".

### **W. W.**

Normally I don't have many problems with other people, but some of them just get you upset.

One of my work colleagues doesn't seem to like me very much. But you have to get along. I always try to be very polite and friendly to her. But sometimes it's extremely difficult when very little kindness comes back from the other person. Last night I thought about the loving kindness exercise. I simply tried to remember that one shouldn't really be angry with people, because they usually treat others badly because they have problems themselves. These people can't really be happy, so one should wish for them to find their happiness and satisfaction.

Therefore, I've tried to have a big "bucket" of loving kindness left for them and to send it to them figuratively. Of course this is not always easy, but it's absolutely the best solution for solving conflicts and maybe even help to support other people in this way. I will do my best to continue to act in this way, and perhaps also to apply the loving kindness exercise more often.

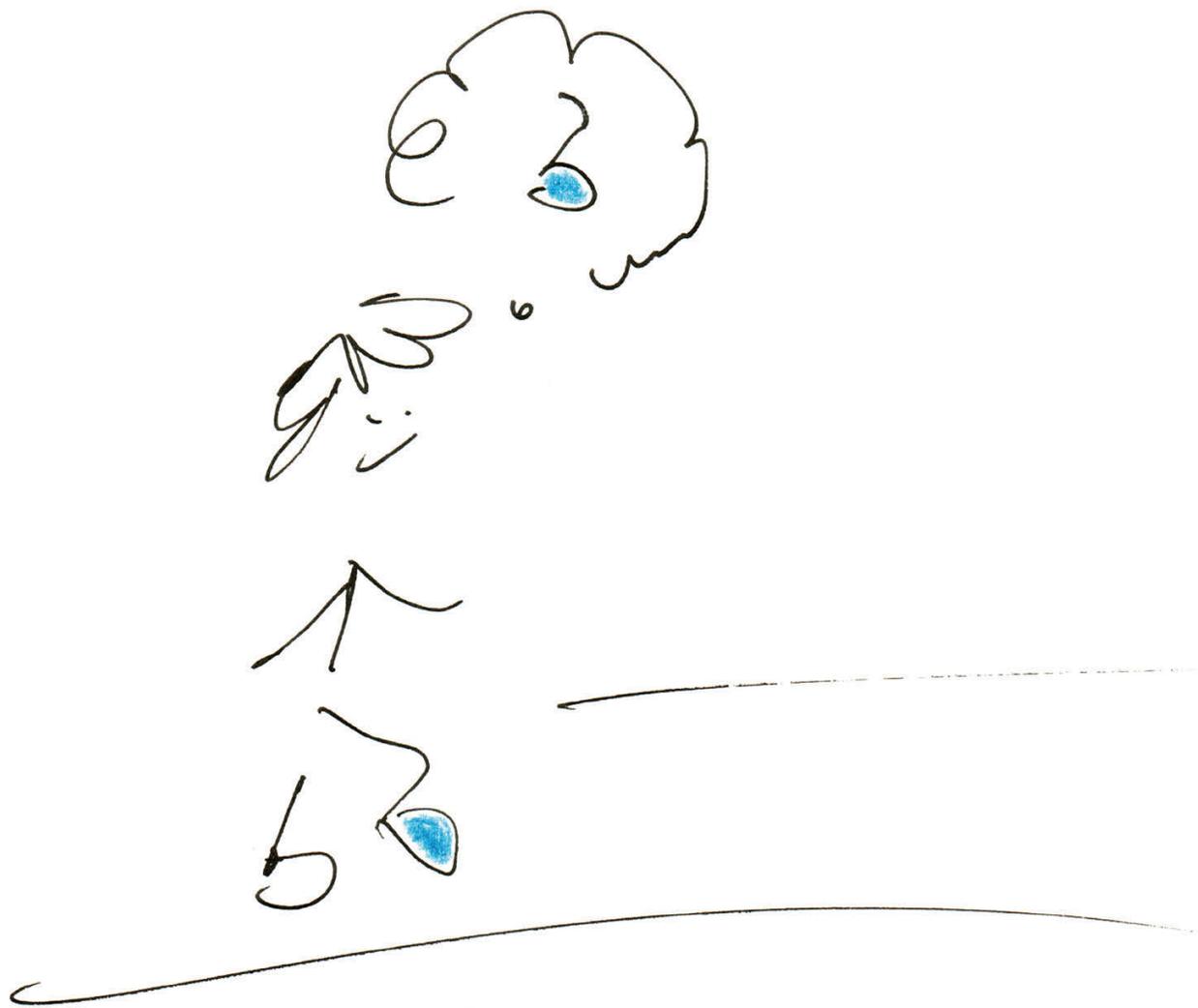
Woche 6  
14.05 20.05

MONTAG

Normalerweise habe ich mit anderen Menschen nicht sehr viele Probleme, aber manche bringen eine einfach auf die Palme. Eine meiner Arbeitskolleginnen scheint mich nicht großartig zu mögen. Doch man muss ja auskommen. Ich versuche immer sehr höflich und freundlich zu ihr zu sein. Doch das fällt manchmal extrem schwer, wenn von der anderen Seite sehr wenig Freundlichkeit zurückkommt. Gestern Abend musste ich an die Übung Liebende Güte denken. Ich habe also einfach versucht daran zu denken, dass man den Menschen nicht wirklich böse sein kann, da sie doch meistens aus Problemen mit sich selbst, andere schlecht behandeln. Diese Menschen könne nicht wirklich glücklich sein, weshalb man ihnen er wünschen sollte, dass sie ihr Glück und ihre Zufriedenheit zu finden. Also habe ich versucht einen großen „Eimer“ Liebende Güte für die übrig zu haben und ihr bildlich zu übergeben. Sowas fällt natürlich nicht immer leicht, aber die absolut beste Lösung Konflikte zu lösen und anderen Menschen vielleicht sogar somit zu helfen und sie zu unterstützen. Ich werde mein Bestes geben weiterhin so zu handeln und vielleicht auch die Übung Liebenden Güte des Öfteren anzuwenden.

SONNTAG

Da diese Woche etwas stressig war, habe ich das Meditieren leider vernachlässigt. Was sehr schade ist, da es doch nicht zu meiner Routine dazu gehört. Gerade deshalb bin ich über die Dienstagsstunde sehr dankbar, da diese mir immer wieder Anreiz verschafft, um dranzubleibe und mir auch immer ein sehr gutes Gefühl gibt.



Bringing awareness to the feet: the walking meditation.