

Loving-Kindness Meditation

Mindfulness Worksheet

Date / Time:

What have you brought mindful awareness to today? Check all that apply.

☐

Heart

☐

Mind

☐

Body

☐

Breath

☐

Environment

To begin this Meditation, please bring kind awareness to

- why you chose this topic
- how your belly, chest, and head each feel when you reflect on this topic
- the emotions that you can associate with these visceral feelings
- the positive or negative impact of any stories you believe in regarding this topic
- the fact that many others are feeling similarly about this topic as you
- how you might feel with increased awareness around this topic
- when you can apply increased mindfulness to this topic in your day-to-day life



This worksheet explores a traditional heart-opening meditation practice called loving kindness meditation. You might also hear this type of meditation referred to as “metta” in the Pali language, or “maitri” in the Sanskrit language.

Loving-kindness meditation is a Buddhist compassion practice, but you do not have to be a Buddhist to try it. Anyone can benefit from meditating on compassion.

Why practice compassion and opening your heart? When we’re ruminating on our own pain and suffering, we are thinking about ourselves. Thinking about ourselves only causes us more pain. In fact, all our suffering comes from putting ourselves first, or thinking about ourselves too much.

Thinking that we need to “get ours” before others get theirs keeps us trapped in the belief that we are separate from others, and it traps us in the belief that there’s not enough of the good stuff to go around.

In truth, we are all connected, and anything in this life that provides lasting happiness is available in great abundance. Most especially, love.

We ourselves benefit when we open our hearts and act more compassionately towards others.

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By shifting the focus on self to a focus on others, we realize that we are connected to all others. By practicing giving, rather than receiving, we recognize that we already have an abundance within us.

Let's begin with the following simple version of a loving-kindness meditation:

MEDITATING ON THE EXHALE BREATH

- Sit comfortably in a quiet place, free from distractions
- Spend 1 minute or more focused on your breath, let go of all other thoughts
- When the mind has settled down, imagine a soft, glowing light at the center of your heart
- This is your abundant source of love
- Now, bring to mind a loved one. Picture them sitting directly across from you
- Choose a person you know, someone you are close to, someone you care about
- As you extend the warm, soft, glowing light from your heart to theirs, think the following four thoughts
 1. *May this person have all the happiness in the world, and all the causes for future happiness*
 2. *May this person be free from all their pain, and free from the causes of future pain*
 3. *May this person, who I love, never be separated from joy*
 4. *May this person, who I love, live in a state of contentment, free from grasping to things, and free from aversion*
- Spend as much time as you'd like with each thought, all the while, filling your friend with light
- After sending the four thoughts, picture your friend having received those thoughts, now happy and content
- Notice how it feels in your own body to see your loved one so happy

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WHAT DID YOU NOTICE?

Describe your experience with the meditation in general



Who did you choose as the beneficiary of your light?

Why did you choose this person?

What did it feel like, to imagine light traveling from your heart to theirs?

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What do you think it means, to not only send them happiness, but the causes for future happiness?



What did it feel like to send them the wish of freedom from their pain?

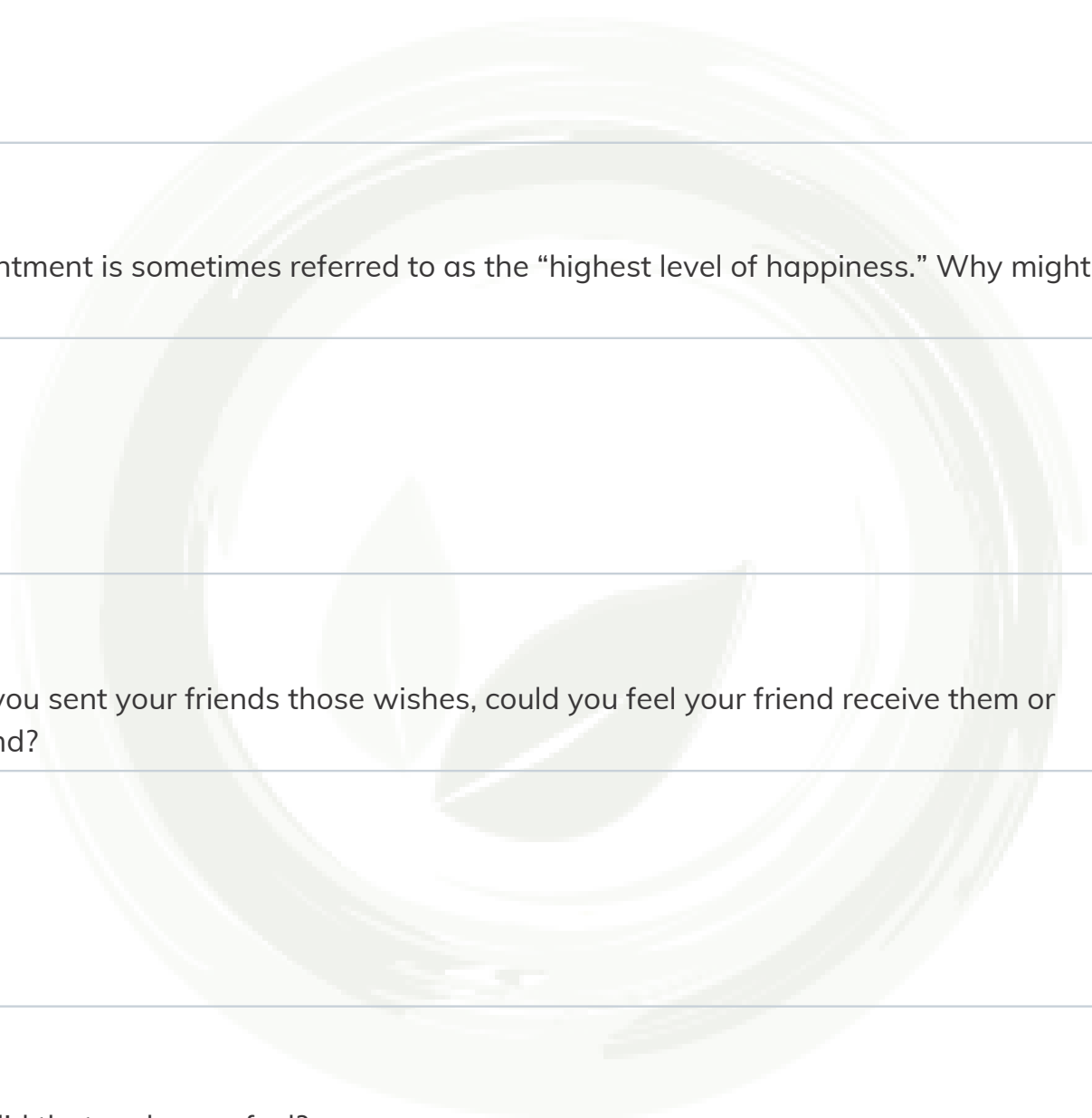
Do you think it's possible to live with joy in your heart, always? Why send that wish?

Explain how grasping to things, or an aversion to certain things might cause sorrow.

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When you think of “contentment” what comes to mind?



Contentment is sometimes referred to as the “highest level of happiness.” Why might this be so?

After you sent your friends those wishes, could you feel your friend receive them or respond?

How did that make you feel?

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These four wishes are sometimes referred to as “the four infinite thoughts.” What do you think makes these thoughts “infinite?”

If we could recognize and remember our connection to others all the time, how might that make us live our lives differently?

Do you agree that you benefit from helping others?

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EXPANDING YOUR CAPACITY FOR COMPASSION

As you get more practiced with this meditation, try switching the person you send the four wishes to. We began here with a loved one. As your capacity for compassion increases, try sending the same four wishes to someone you hardly know, this should be someone to whom you have no particular feelings of like or dislike.

Then, try the meditation with a person who presents you with a challenge. What does it feel like to send a difficult person these same four wishes? Finally, try the meditation with yourself as both giver and receiver. After each meditation, run through the same questions above.

REVIEW

We often make the mistake of thinking that in order to be happy, we must first get everything we need or want. But happiness is not something from outside of us that we can “get.”

Happiness, contentment, and freedom from our pain, are mindsets that come from within. They arise when we realize we already have everything we need. We are already perfect and whole.

Giving away happiness to others assumes that you yourself have enough. This works with every type of giving. When your subconscious sees you sharing happiness, it's reminded that you must have happiness to share.

By practicing compassion meditations and working within our current capacity, we're gradually able to increase our capacity to share love and happiness. Since love comes from a limitless resource within, we can learn to give more and more over time.

Who shares love and happiness freely? Happy people! By taking the action of sending well wishes to others, we realize the wealth and wellness that we already have within ourselves.