

The Mother 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



The Tibetan Buddhist practice of the Mother Meditation is one of many that's designed to help us build our capacity for compassion.

To do this mindfulness practice, you do not have to be Buddhist, nor Tibetan. All of us can benefit from practices geared towards opening our hearts.

Why should we increase our capacity for compassion? All of our happiness comes not from worrying about me and mine, but from caring for others. When we place ourselves first, we reinforce the mistaken notion that we are separate from others, and that happiness is limited.

By placing care for others first, we remember that all beings are connected, and that contentment, love and happiness are available in abundance.

The more we share, the more we have to give. In particular, the Mother Meditation asks us to view each being in the world as someone who once gave us infinite love and care. We strive to repay their kindness by being kind in turn.

If each of us were to apply the principle of the Mother Meditation to our daily lives, we would live in a world where everyone was kind, and everyone respected each other.

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Thus, we begin to see how our increasing own personal capacity for compassion can create a more compassionate world.

The Mother Meditation begins with the premise that all beings everywhere have at one point been our mother. If you do not believe in past or future lives, you can simply imagine that this is the case for the purpose of the exercise.

Traditionally, Tibetan Buddhists believe in infinite past lives, with no beginning. Thus logically, if we have been infinite beings in the past, with infinite mothers, it only makes sense that those we meet in this life have at one point been our mother.

As our mother, all beings at one point cared for us and ensured our survival. Our mothers devoted their bodies to our development and care, they fed us and clothed us and protected us from harm.

They loved us. Even if we have a challenging relationship with mothers, we must concede that without her care in our earliest days of existence, we wouldn't have survived.

We recognize that all beings, all of whom have been our mother, only want the same things we do. They want to be happy, and they want to be free from their pain.

We begin to develop a deep desire to repay our mothers' kindness by growing our own capacity for compassion, and by leading them from their pain to happiness. We make a promise to treat all beings with the love our mothers deserve.

What would it be like if we walked around daily with deep gratitude and compassion for all beings, as if they were our mothers? Try it with the following exercise.

THE MOTHER MEDITATION EXERCISE - FULL DAY

- It's helpful to begin with a morning meditation of 10-20 minutes
- In a quiet palace, free from distraction, open yourself to the possibility that you have lived countless past lives
- Consider the logic: if you've lived infinite lives, each being you meet today must have been your mother in a past life

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- Meditate on the depth of the sacrifices a mother makes for her child
- Meditate on the dependency a child has on their mother
- Generate a deep sense of gratitude, and a desire to repay the kindness of your mothers
- Vow to do all in your power to repay your mothers by helping them achieve the same thing we all want; freedom from pain, and a life full of happiness
- As you move about your day, play with the following exercise
- Picture every single person you interact with as someone who was once your mother
- Feel a deep compassion for them, and a deep sense of gratitude
- Everyone you see on your commute, the barista making your coffee, your co-workers, your housemates, your own children were all at one time your mother
- Interact with them as if it's your top-most priority to repay their kindness for countless past lifetimes of love and care
- Think, how could I save this person from pain? How could I bring them happiness?
- It could be as simple as smiling, doing no harm or just being kind

WHAT DID YOU NOTICE?

Describe in general what your meditation was like

Where did you feel resistance during the meditation?

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Where did you feel compassion during the meditation?



Describe in general the exercise throughout the day

Were you able to recall that everyone you met was once your mother?

Was it easier to feel compassion for some than others?

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Is everyone worthy of compassion?



When you are unhappy, who is it that you are thinking about?

When you are the most happy, who is it that you are thinking about?

How did the mindfulness activity change the way you acted towards people?

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Was there any interaction in particular that was very new and different for you?



How might the way you treat people change the way in which they act towards you?

What would your world look like if you practiced compassion for everyone all the time?

How might regular practice of the Mother Meditation change you and your world view?

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REVIEW

We may or may not believe in past and future lives, and that's ok. But through training, we should strive to reach a point where we believe that everyone is inherently good and that everyone deserves happiness, and our love and kindness.

Everyone is equal in that we are all seeking to avoid pain, and we all want to be happy. Every being everywhere is worthy of our compassion.

We may not agree with everyone's method of seeking happiness. It's sometimes difficult to offer compassion to those who are rude or hateful or mean. And yet if those same people had happiness, they wouldn't hurt others. So why not treat everyone well?

Building our capacity for compassion takes practice. Begin where you are, focus on your loved ones, and then slowly expand to strangers and the most challenging people in your life. As your own heart grows, so too will the goodness you see in the world around you.

