Loving-Kindness Is A Longevity Practice

5 MIN READ

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Loving-kindness meditation is a way of holding ourselves and others with compassion, even when life feels sharp and unrelenting.

Loving-kindness is not a “soft skill,” it’s a tough skill to master.

Love, especially the love we cultivate inside, is limitless. It is not transactional. It is not a reward. It is a force, a wellspring we can tap into at any time.

When I first encountered **Sharon Salzberg’s teachings** on loving-kindness, I was skeptical. Sharon is a pioneering meditation teacher and co-founder of the **Insight Meditation Society**, and has spent decades teaching loving-kindness meditation. For me, the idea of sitting in meditation and sending well wishes to myself and others (even to people who I didn’t like) felt forced, or at the very least, idealistic. But I was drawn to the possibility of something softer in the face of some brutal hardships. My mind, like many minds, has always been conditioned to focus on fixing what’s wrong, finding what’s missing, and looking outside of myself for answers. Loving-kindness asks us to shift our attention to something more radical: the inherent goodness in ourselves and in others.

Overcoming Resistance To Loving-Kindness

At first, the practice felt awkward. Repeating phrases like *“May I be happy, may I be*

safe, may I be at ease" felt silly, foreign, almost indulgent. But I stayed with it. And something surprising happened. I noticed how much resistance I had to receiving my own well-wishes. I could send kindness out to others easily, loved ones, even strangers, but when I turned those words inward, my body braced against them. That's where the work began. Because if I couldn't hold loving-kindness for myself, how could I truly offer it to anyone else?

Mindfulness, as I've explored over the years in my writing, is often misunderstood as a purely cognitive practice, a way to manage thoughts and bring the mind to the present. But real mindfulness, the kind that changes you, is deeply embodied. It is about feeling the stories we tell ourselves in our bellies and bones, noticing the way our bodies hold our histories, our wounds, our joys. Loving-kindness meditation taps into this wisdom by guiding us into the felt experience of love. It teaches us that kindness is not just a thought, but a visceral, cellular experience.

As I continued practicing, I found that loving-kindness is not just about softening; it's about strength. It takes courage to keep your heart open in a world that so often feels unsafe. And it takes a steady, grounded heart to choose compassion when aggression is easier. Over time, I realized that loving-kindness is not making me more fragile—it's making me more resilient so I can meet the world's sharp edges without becoming jagged myself.**?**

The Power of Loving-Kindness Meditation

This practice has changed my life in ways both subtle and profound. It shifted my internal dialogue, softened my judgments, and allowed me to hold space for my own imperfections without trying to fix them. It has shown me that I do not need to earn love, that I do not need to be perfect to be worthy of kindness. And perhaps most importantly, it has reminded me that the love I cultivate in meditation is not just for

me—it is a force that moves through me, connecting me to others in ways seen and unseen.

On Sundays, I take this practice to a nearby lake. It started as a way to reset, a quiet ritual in the midst of a chaotic life, and over time, it has become essential. The kids call it ‘mom’s church,’ a space where I sit, breathe, and simply allow whatever is present to be there. Sometimes, I feel the pull of my to-do list, the temptation to cut it short, but I’ve learned to sit with that, too. This time by the water is a profound act of care—not just for myself, but for the life I continue to build with presence, patience, and love.

If you’ve ever felt unworthy of kindness, if you’ve ever struggled to receive love, I invite you to sit with this practice. It may feel awkward at first. It may even feel impossible. But stay with it. Whisper the words to yourself even if you don’t believe them yet. Love, after all, is not a destination. It is a practice—an action. And every time we choose it, we are rewriting the stories we’ve told ourselves about who we are and what we deserve.

May you be happy. May you be safe. May you be at ease. And may you know that you are already enough.

?A Loving-Kindness Meditation From Sharon Salzberg?

Sharon Salzberg describes this practice as the song of the heart.

Find a quiet place to sit comfortably.

- **Start with yourself:** Silently repeat these simple phrases as your guides, *May I be safe. May I be happy. May I be healthy. May I live with ease.*

- **Expand outward**: Extend these wishes to loved ones, acquaintances, and even those with whom you have difficulty.
- **Feel the warmth of each phrase**, allowing kindness and generosity to flow from within.

Over time, this practice calms the nervous system, fosters connection, and supports your heart. Let Sharon Salzberg guide you through this transformative meditation: **Listen Here**.

Write and let me know if you try it and what you experience.

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