**Kindness Meditation**

**Introduction to group:** This Kindness Meditation is based on Buddhist Metta meditations. They are used to encourage loving-kindness to ourselves, to those we love, to those we don’t know and even to people with whom we may have a personal conflict. Today, we are sending a positive intention to all beings equally and without exception.

**To begin:** For this exercise, facilitators should read the meditation below for participants. An alternative to these meditations are group-led prayer circles led by clergy, with a focus on peacefulness and a reflection on a biblical verse or spiritual quote.

Ask participants to sit comfortably in a chair with feet planted on the floor, legs uncrossed and hands resting on the tops of their thighs. Participants are also welcome to sit cross-legged on the floor or even lay down on a comfortable beach towel. Choose a quiet room or outdoor space with limited distractions. Read the following text slowly, softly and calmly, pausing for a few deep breaths after each repetition and between each line.

**Meditation to be read aloud:** *(Approx. 10-12 minutes)*

**Line 1:** Sitting comfortably, with your hands resting on the top of your thighs, take moment to breathe in slowly and exhale fully…If possible, breathe in and out through your nose throughout this meditation…Take a few more deep breaths, noticing the inhalation and exhalation. If you are comfortable doing so, close your eyes. Or, if you prefer, gaze softly at a space in front of you.

**Line 2:** In our Kindness meditation, we will begin by directing loving-kindness to ourselves, and we will do so by mentally repeating to ourselves the positive intentions of being safe, happy, healthy and peaceful. Take a deep breath in and out. As you exhale, allow yourself to relax, feeling completely supported by your chair.

**Line 3:** Repeat to yourself, silently, *May I be safe*. This means safety from physical harm as well as feeling emotionally safe…May I be safe.

**Line 4:** Next, mentally say to yourself, *May I be happy*. Everyone deserves to be happy…May I be happy.

**Line 5:** Repeat to yourself, silently, *May I be healthy*. It is everyone’s desire to live a healthy and pain-free life…May I be healthy.

**Line 6:** Lastly, say to yourself, *May I be peaceful*. Give yourself permission to put aside outside concerns and stress for this moment…May I be peaceful.

**Line 7:** Now, I’d like you to think of a friend, or someone you care deeply for, and set your meditation on that person. You may also choose someone you know of who is ill or dealing with a lot of stress in his or her life. Send loving-kindness to that person.

**Line 8:** Keeping this person’s name in mind, say to yourself, silently, *May \_\_\_ be safe*. Take a deep breath in and out and repeat in your mind, *May they be happy…May they be healthy…May they be peaceful*.

**Line 9:** Next, take a moment to think of someone with whom you would like to communicate with better or someone with whom you are in conflict. For this first Kindness meditation, avoid choosing someone who has caused you a great deal of suffering. Start with someone who simply bothers you. It’s okay to admit it to yourself. We’ll never know. Recognize that this person, like you, wants to be happy.

**Line 10:** Include yourself when you send loving-kindness to this person. Repeat to yourself, *May we by safe…May we be happy…May we be healthy…May we be peaceful*.

**Line 11:** Lastly, we want to send an intention for loving-kindness to the world, including everything and everyone in nature. Now, that “we” includes ourselves and every living being…*May we be safe…May we be happy…May we be healthy…May we be peaceful*.”

**Line 12:** Allow yourself to relax here, in this peaceful moment. Take several more deep breaths; and, when you are ready, slowly open your eyes and smile.

**Follow-up questions:**

*How do you feel?*

*Did you observe anything unusual or interesting during your meditation?*

*How did you feel sending loving-kindness to someone you like vs. someone you may not like as much?*

*Is there anything else you’d like to share about this experience?*