

Recovery Dharma Meeting Script

Before the meeting, the facilitator may find volunteers to read the following:

- *The Practice*
- *The Four Noble Truths and Eightfold Path*
- *The Dedication of Merit*

Opening

Welcome to this meeting of _____. We are gathered to explore a Buddhist-inspired approach to recovery from addiction of all kinds. We are peer-led and do not follow any one leader or teacher, but trust in the wisdom of the Buddha (the potential for our own awakening), the Dharma (the truth, or the teachings), and the Sangha (our community of wise friends on this path). This is a program of empowerment and doesn't ask us to believe in anything other than our own potential to change and heal. We have found a guide for our recovery in the Buddhist teachings of the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path, and we invite you to investigate these practices and principles as tools for your own path of liberation from the suffering of addiction. We understand that this is not the only path to recovery and many may choose to combine these practices with other recovery programs.

My name is _____ and I am the facilitator of this meeting. I am not a Buddhist teacher, nor do I have any particular authority in this meeting. I am a member of this community and have volunteered to help lead our meeting and discussion today.

I have asked _____ to read **The Practice**.
(Volunteer reads The Practice)

I have asked _____ to read **The Four Noble Truths and Eightfold Path**.
(Volunteer reads The Four Noble Truths and Eightfold Path)

THE PRACTICE

Renunciation: We understand *addiction* to describe the overwhelming craving and compulsive use of substances or behaviors in order to escape present-time reality, either by clinging to pleasure or running from pain. We commit to the intention of abstinence from alcohol and other addictive substances. For those of us recovering from process addictions, particularly those for which complete abstinence is not possible, we also identify and commit to wise boundaries around our harmful behaviors, preferably with the help of a mentor or therapeutic professional.

Meditation: We commit to the intention of developing a daily meditation practice. We use meditation as a tool to investigate our actions, intentions, and reactivity. Meditation is a personal practice, and we commit to finding a balanced effort toward this and other healthy practices that are appropriate to our own journey on the path.

Meetings: We attend recovery meetings whenever possible, in person and/or online. Some may wish to be part of other recovery fellowships and Buddhist communities. In early recovery, it is recommended to attend a recovery meeting as often as possible. For many that may mean every day. We also commit to becoming an active part of the community, offering our own experiences and service wherever possible.

The Path: We commit to deepening our understanding of the Four Noble Truths and to practicing the Eightfold Path in our daily lives.

Inquiry and Investigation: We explore the Four Noble Truths as they relate to our addictive behavior through writing and sharing in-depth, detailed Inquiries. These can be worked with the guidance of a mentor, in partnership with a trusted friend, or with a group. As we complete our written Inquiries, we undertake to hold ourselves accountable and take direct responsibility for our actions, which includes making amends for the harm we have caused in our past. .

Sangha, Wise Friends, Mentors: We cultivate relationships within a recovery community, to both support our own recovery and support the recovery of others. After we have completed significant work on our Inquiries, established a meditation practice, and achieved renunciation from our addictive behaviors, we can then become mentors to help others on their path to liberation from addiction. Anyone with any period of time of renunciation and practice can be of service to others in their sangha. When mentors are not available, a group of wise friends can act as partners in self-inquiry and support each other's practice.

Growth: We continue our study of these Buddhist practices through reading, listening to dharma talks, visiting and becoming members of recovery and spiritual sanghas, and attending meditation or dharma retreats when we believe these practices will contribute to our understanding and wisdom. We undertake a lifelong journey of growth and awakening.

THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS AND EIGHTFOLD PATH

As people who have struggled with addiction, we are already intimately familiar with the truth of suffering. Even if we have never heard of the Buddha, at some level we already know the foundation of his teachings, which we call the Dharma: that in this life, there is suffering.

The Buddha also taught the way to free ourselves from this suffering. The heart of these teachings is the Four Noble Truths and the corresponding commitments, which are the foundation of our program.

1. There is suffering. We commit to understanding the truth of suffering.
2. There is a cause of suffering. We commit to understanding that craving leads to suffering.
3. There is an end to suffering. We commit to understanding and experiencing that less craving leads to less suffering.
4. There is a path that leads to the end of suffering. We commit to cultivating the path.

The Buddha taught that by living ethically, practicing meditation, and developing wisdom and compassion, we can end the suffering that is created by resisting, running from, and misunderstanding reality. We have found that these practices and principles can end the suffering of addiction. The Eightfold Path helps us find our way in recovery, and consists of the following:

1. Wise Understanding
2. Wise Intention
3. Wise Speech
4. Wise Action
5. Wise Livelihood
6. Wise Effort
7. Wise Mindfulness
8. Wise Concentration

MEDITATION

(The facilitator leads a Buddhist meditation of their choice.)

We will now do a guided meditation on_____. Your eyes may be closed or gently open. Meditation is a personal practice, and we encourage you to explore with a spirit of openness and curiosity. Part of what we are doing is learning to sit with discomfort, but meditation can bring up powerful emotions for some of us, and if you find that you need to “tap the brakes” during practice, you can do so in the following ways: by opening the eyes; taking a few deep slow breaths; placing a hand over your heart or belly; focusing attention on a soothing object; imagining a positive place, activity, or memory; or quietly shifting your position. Remember to be kind and gentle with yourself. It’s always okay to take care of yourself during meditation. If you need to get up during the meditation, please do so as quietly as possible, and please hold your comments and questions until after meditation.

(Meetings can be a Literature Discussion, Topic Discussion, or other format)

LITERATURE DISCUSSION MEETING

We will now take turns reading from the book *The Dharma of Recovery* (or another Buddhist book), and then open the meeting for discussion.

TOPIC/SPEAKER DISCUSSION MEETING

_____ (*speaker*) will now speak about_____ (*a topic related to recovery and Buddhism, or their experience in addiction and recovery*), and then we will open the meeting for discussion.

GROUP SHARING

(Meetings choose whether to do tag-pass, facilitator selected, or “popcorn” style sharing)

Please limit your share to three to five minutes to ensure that everyone who wants to has a chance to speak. We ask that there is no cross-talk, meaning we do not comment on another person’s share or offer opinions or advice. We commit to making this space as safe and welcoming as possible for all members of our community. Please be wise in your speech by trying to use “I” statements and focusing your share on your own experience of addiction, recovery, Buddhist principles and practice, or tonight’s topic.

CLOSING

That is all the time we have for sharing. Thank you for being with us tonight. In order to respect each others' privacy and to create a safe environment for all who attend, please keep everything that was said in this meeting and who was here confidential. We encourage you to continue your meditation practice, your study of Buddhist principles, and to reach out to others in order to build community. Would anyone who is willing to talk with newcomers after the meeting please raise their hand?

ANNOUNCEMENTS

We now pass the basket for dāna, which is a Buddhist term for the practice of generosity. Please give what you can to support the meeting.

(Announcements about clean up, phone/email list, books for sale, free handouts, upcoming retreats, or other news pertaining to the group.)

We will now close with the **Dedication of Merit**.
(Volunteer reads the Dedication of Merit)

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9. Wise Understanding
10. Wise Intention
11. Wise Speech
12. Wise Action
13. Wise Livelihood
14. Wise Effort
15. Wise Mindfulness
16. Wise Concentration

DEDICATION OF MERIT

(Volunteer may read, or pass out copies to read as a group. Individual meetings and sanghas may choose to write their own dedications of merit.)

Refuge does not arise in a particular place, but in the space within the goodness of our hearts. When this space is imbued with wisdom, respect, and love, we call it sangha. We hope that the pain of addiction, trauma, and feeling “apart” actually leads us back toward the heart and that we might understand compassion, wisdom, and change ever more deeply. As we have learned from practice, great pain does not erase goodness, but in fact informs it.

May we make the best use of our practice, and whatever freedom arises from our efforts here today. May this be a cause and condition for less suffering and more safety in our world.

Basic Meditation

Sit in a comfortable but attentive posture, allowing your back to be straight but not rigid or stiff. Feel your head balanced on your shoulders, allow your face and jaw to relax, with arms and hands resting in a comfortable position.

Be attentive to what's happening within your own awareness, right here and right now, without judgment.

As you sit, begin to notice the **sensations of breath**.

Pay attention for a moment to how your abdomen moves on each in-breath and out-breath, the movement of air through your nostrils, the slight movement of your chest and shoulders.

Find the spot in your body where the sensation of breathing is most vivid, whether it be your abdomen, your chest or your shoulders, or the movement of air through your nostrils. See how fully aware you can be of your whole cycle of breathing, recognizing that each part of the cycle is different from the other part.

(pause)

You will notice your attention shifting away from the breath from time to time. It's perfectly normal for thoughts to wander into fantasies, memories, worries, or things you need to do. When you notice your mind has wandered, try to meet it with a spirit of friendliness. You don't need to *do* anything about it. There is nothing to *fix*. Rather than forcing it, just try to allow yourself to become curious about what it's like to be breathing right now, and you'll find that the attention is naturally drawn back to the physical sensations of breath as it moves through your body.

Stay alert, relaxed, and above all, compassionate, as you maintain awareness of where the mind goes. Each time you notice the mind has been distracted or has wandered, gently shift your awareness back to sensations of breath.

(pause)

Notice the tendency to want to control your breathing. Let the quality of attention be light and

easy, one of simply observing and noticing. You don't need to control the duration, intensity, pace, or the pause between each breath. Just be present.

(pause)

As this meditation comes to an end, recognize that you spent this time intentionally aware of your moment to moment experience, building the capacity for opening the senses to the vividness, to the change, to the aliveness of the present moment, expanding your skill to be curious about, and open to, whatever presents itself, without judgment.

Then, whenever you're ready, allow your eyes to open and gently bring your attention back to the space you're in.

Awareness of Sound

Sit in a comfortable but attentive posture, allowing your back to be straight but not rigid or stiff. Feel your head balanced on your shoulders, allow your face and jaw to relax, with arms and hands resting in a comfortable position.

Be attentive to what's happening within your own awareness, right here and right now, without judgment.

As you sit, begin to notice the **sensations of breath**.

Pay attention for a moment to how your abdomen moves on each in-breath and out-breath, the movement of air through your nostrils, the slight movement of your chest and shoulders.

Find the spot in your body where the sensation of breathing is most vivid, whether it be your abdomen, your chest or your shoulders, or the movement of air through your nostrils. See how fully aware you can be of your whole cycle of breathing, recognizing that each part of the cycle is different from the other part.

(pause)

You will notice your attention shifting away from the breath from time to time. It's perfectly normal for thoughts to wander into fantasies, memories, worries, or things you need to do. When you notice your mind has wandered, try to meet it with a spirit of friendliness. You don't need to *do* anything about it. There is nothing to *fix*. Rather than forcing it, just try to allow yourself to become curious about what it's like to be breathing right now, and you'll find that the attention is naturally drawn back to the physical sensations of breath as it moves through your body.

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(pause)

Notice the tendency to want to control your breathing. Let the quality of attention be light and

easy, one of simply observing and noticing. You don't need to control the duration, intensity, pace, or the pause between each breath. Just be present.

(pause)

You may notice that there are sounds that come from inside or outside the space you're in, sounds of traffic, the movement of others in the room, or something else going on. If your attention has been drawn by the sound, just be aware of it. Stay with it long enough to notice the quality of the sound--vibration, tone, volume or intensity--being aware of the urge of the mind to label sound: as traffic, as voices, as music, etc. Try to experience the sound without the labels we put on it. Practice recognizing it as just vibrations in the eardrums, just hearing.

Once you've noticed the sound, let it go and bring your attention back to the breath. Let your breath be your anchor of awareness. Each time your awareness goes somewhere else, you can just gently come back to breath, without judgment.

As this meditation comes to an end, recognize that you spent this time intentionally aware of your moment to moment experience, building the capacity for opening the senses to the vividness, to the change, to the aliveness of the present moment, expanding your skill to be curious about, and open to, whatever presents itself, without judgment.

Then, whenever you're ready, allow your eyes to open and gently bring your attention back to the space you're in.

Awareness of Feeling Tone

Sit in a comfortable but attentive posture, allowing your back to be straight but not rigid or stiff. Feel your head balanced on your shoulders, allow your face and jaw to relax, with arms and hands resting in a comfortable position.

Be attentive to what's happening within your own awareness, right here and right now, without judgment.

As you sit, begin to notice the **sensations of breath**.

Pay attention for a moment to how your abdomen moves on each in-breath and out-breath, the movement of air through your nostrils, the slight movement of your chest and shoulders.

Find the spot in your body where the sensation of breathing is most vivid, whether it be your abdomen, your chest or your shoulders, or the movement of air through your nostrils. See how fully aware you can be of your whole cycle of breathing, recognizing that each part of the cycle is different from the other part.

(pause)

You will notice your attention shifting away from the breath from time to time. It's perfectly normal for thoughts to wander into fantasies, memories, worries, or things you need to do. When you notice your mind has wandered, try to meet it with a spirit of friendliness. You don't need to *do* anything about it. There is nothing to *fix*. Rather than forcing it, just try to allow yourself to become curious about what it's like to be breathing right now, and you'll find that the attention is naturally drawn back to the physical sensations of breath as it moves through your body.

Stay alert, relaxed, and above all, compassionate, as you maintain awareness of where the mind goes. Each time you notice the mind has been distracted or has wandered, gently shift your awareness back to sensations of breath.

(pause)

Notice the tendency to want to control your breathing. Let the quality of attention be light and

easy, one of simply observing and noticing. You don't need to control the duration, intensity, pace, or the pause between each breath. Just be present.

(pause)

Notice the tendency to have an opinion about things--liking the way things are going right now, not liking it, or sometimes feeling neutral. This tendency can also be an object of awareness. We can practice just noticing that there is an opinion or feeling about how things are right now.

When you notice the sensation of liking or pleasure, you can silently tell yourself, "So, this is my liking mind," or "Hello, attachment." When you notice the sensation of not liking, you may know, "So that's my critical mind," or "Hello, aversion," or "So this is what it feels like to want things be different than they are." We can learn how to notice our pleasant and unpleasant feelings about thoughts and experiences, without judgement and without having to do anything about it.

As you notice that happening, just bring your awareness back to the physical sensations of breath wherever it's most vivid for you, just riding the entire cycle of breathing, one cycle after another.

As this meditation comes to an end, recognize that you spent this time intentionally aware of your moment to moment experience, building the capacity for opening the senses to the vividness, to the change, to the aliveness of the present moment, expanding your skill to be curious about, and open to, whatever presents itself, without judgment.

Then, whenever you're ready, allow your eyes to open and gently bring your attention back to the space you're in.

Awareness of Body Sensations

You can use the script below to lead yourself or others through a meditation.

Sit in a comfortable but attentive posture, allowing your back to be straight but not rigid or stiff. Feel your head balanced on your shoulders, allow your face and jaw to relax, with arms and hands resting in a comfortable position.

Be attentive to what's happening within your own awareness, right here and right now, without judgment.

As you sit, begin to notice the sensations of breath.

Pay attention for a moment to how your abdomen moves on each in-breath and out-breath, the movement of air through your nostrils, the slight movement of your chest and shoulders.

Find the spot in your body where the sensation of breathing is most vivid, whether it be your abdomen, your chest or your shoulders, or the movement of air through your nostrils. See how fully aware you can be of your whole cycle of breathing, recognizing that each part of the cycle is different from the other part.

(pause)

You will notice your attention shifting away from the breath from time to time. It's perfectly normal for thoughts to wander into fantasies, memories, worries, or things you need to do. When you notice your mind has wandered, try to meet it with a spirit of friendliness. You don't need to do anything about it. There is nothing to fix. Rather than forcing it, just try to allow yourself to become curious about what it's like to be breathing right now, and you'll find that the attention is naturally drawn back to the physical sensations of breath as it moves through your body.

Stay alert, relaxed, and above all, compassionate, as you maintain awareness of where the mind goes. Each time you notice the mind has been distracted or has wandered, gently shift your awareness back to sensations of breath.

(pause)

Notice the tendency to want to control your breathing. Let the quality of attention be light and

easy, one of simply observing and noticing. You don't need to control the duration, intensity, pace, or the pause between each breath. Just be present.

(pause)

You may notice your attention shifting to body sensations--coolness or warmth, the pressure of your seat on the chair or cushion, maybe achiness, discomfort, or tension. As you become aware of each sensation, notice precisely where it is in the body. Try to notice it in its fullness, how your experience is in this moment with the actual physical sensations of pressure, throbbing, warmth,

pulling, or tingling, without judgment or labels. Just notice that it's possible to stay for a moment longer with that sensation, experienced as pure sensation, without the labels of good or bad, pleasurable or unpleasurable. Can you stay with the experience without having to react to it? Just for this moment, be curious about it: How big is it? Does the sensation have a texture or weight? What quality does it have? How is it changing over time?

If there is a strong feeling of physical discomfort that is making it hard to stay focused on the breath, pause before acting on the impulse to move. Bring full awareness to the feeling, and once you're aware of where that is and understand your intention to change the discomfort, move with full mindfulness of your action.

As this meditation comes to an end, recognize that you spent this time intentionally aware of your moment to moment experience, building the capacity for opening the senses to the vividness, to the change, to the aliveness of the present moment, expanding your skill to be curious about, and open to, whatever presents itself, without judgment.

Then, whenever you're ready, allow your eyes to open and gently bring your attention back to the space you're in.

Awareness of Processes of the Mind

Sit in a comfortable but attentive posture, allowing your back to be straight but not rigid or stiff. Feel your head balanced on your shoulders, allow your face and jaw to relax, with arms and hands resting in a comfortable position.

Be attentive to what's happening within your own awareness, right here and right now, without judgment.

As you sit, begin to notice the **sensations of breath**.

Pay attention for a moment to how your abdomen moves on each in-breath and out-breath, the movement of air through your nostrils, the slight movement of your chest and shoulders.

Find the spot in your body where the sensation of breathing is most vivid, whether it be your abdomen, your chest or your shoulders, or the movement of air through your nostrils. See how fully aware you can be of your whole cycle of breathing, recognizing that each part of the cycle is different from the other part.

(pause)

You will notice your attention shifting away from the breath from time to time. It's perfectly normal for thoughts to wander into fantasies, memories, worries, or things you need to do. When you notice your mind has wandered, try to meet it with a spirit of friendliness. You don't need to do anything about it. There is nothing to fix. Rather than forcing it, just try to allow yourself to become curious about what it's like to be breathing right now, and you'll find that the attention is naturally drawn back to the physical sensations of breath as it moves through your body.

Stay alert, relaxed, and above all, compassionate, as you maintain awareness of where the mind goes. Each time you notice the mind has been distracted or has wandered, gently shift your awareness back to sensations of breath.

(pause)

Notice the tendency to want to control your breathing. Let the quality of attention be light and easy, one of simply observing and noticing. You don't need to control the duration, intensity, pace, or the pause between each breath. Just be present.

(pause)

As you meditate, notice where the mind goes, in terms of thoughts; liking or disliking; perceptions or sensation; hearing of sound; or feelings of peace, sadness, joy, frustration, or anticipation. Just notice these raw thought forms, and then return awareness to sensations of the movement of breath.

If your mind has gone off on a fantasy, thought, judgment, worry, sensation, or sound, just notice in

a friendly way that this is happening and come back to the breath. Recognize that the awareness of the distraction is important to this experience, both the movement away from breath and the coming back.

Notice how one thought leads to another, and then another. In those moments when you get lost in thought or your awareness goes somewhere else, see if it is possible to notice the moment when that flicker of awareness happens, when you recognize that your mind has wandered. This is a moment of mindfulness. You can acknowledge yourself for noticing you've gone somewhere else, and then just easily bring your attention back to breath in a friendly and non-judgmental way.

As this meditation comes to an end, recognize that you spent this time intentionally aware of your moment to moment experience, building the capacity for opening the senses to the vividness, to the change, to the aliveness of the present moment, expanding your skill to be curious about, and open to, whatever presents itself, without judgment.

Then, whenever you're ready, allow your eyes to open and gently bring your attention back to the space you're in.

Metta (Lovingkindness) Meditation

Find a comfortable but alert position in which to sit. As you allow your eyes to gently close, pay attention to the body and see if there are any minor adjustments that will help you maintain the position for the duration of the meditation. Rest your hands comfortably on your legs or in your lap.

We'll start with a few minutes of concentration practice, just to help our minds settle and arrive in our present time experience. Allow your breathing to be natural, seeing where in the body you can feel the breath most naturally. It may be in the stomach or abdomen, where you can feel the rising and falling as the body breathes. It might be in the chest, where you may notice the expansion and contraction as the body inhales and exhales. Perhaps it's at the nostrils, where you can feel a slight tickle as the air comes in, and the subtle warmth as the body exhales.

Breathing in, just bring a gentle awareness to the breath. Breathing out, be aware of the breath leaving the body.

(Pause)

You may notice the mind wandering. This offers us an opportunity to cultivate mindfulness and concentration. Each time we notice the mind wandering, we're strengthening our ability to recognize our present experience. Each time we bring the mind back to the breath, we strengthen our ability to concentrate. Treat it as an opportunity rather than a problem.

(Pause)

Now begin offering mettā (lovingkindness) to yourself. We start with ourselves because without loving ourselves it is almost impossible to love others.

Breathe gently, and repeat silently to yourself the following phrases, or any other phrases of your choosing that communicate a kind and friendly intention:

“May I be filled with lovingkindness.”

“May I be safe from inner and outer dangers.”

“May I be well in body, heart, and mind.”

“May I be at ease and happy.”

Repeat these phrases several times, perhaps picturing yourself receiving them. If that is difficult, it can sometimes be helpful to picture ourselves as a child receiving this love. Feelings contrary to lovingkindness, like irritation, anger, or doubt, may come up for you. If this happens, be patient with yourself, allowing whatever arises to be received in a spirit of kindness, and then simply return to the phrases.

(two to three minutes of silence)

Now bring to mind someone who has benefitted you or been especially kind. This may be a loved one, a friend, a teacher or mentor. As this person comes to mind, tune into your natural desire to see this person happy, free from suffering, and at ease with life. Begin to offer this person the same phrases of lovingkindness and care:

“May you be filled with lovingkindness.”
“May you be safe from inner and outer dangers.”
“May you be well in body, heart, and mind.”
“May you be at ease and happy.”

(two to three minutes of silence)

Let this person go and bring to mind a neutral person. This is someone you see, maybe regularly, but don't know very well. It may be somebody who works somewhere you go a lot, a coworker, a person you've seen at meetings, or maybe a neighbor.

Although you don't know this person well, you can recognize that just as you wish to be happy, this person wants to be happy as well. You don't need to know what their happiness looks like. Again, offer this person the phrases of lovingkindness:

“May you be filled with lovingkindness.”
“May you be safe from inner and outer dangers.”
“May you be well in body, heart, and mind.”
“May you be at ease and happy.”

(two to three minutes of silence)

Now, letting this neutral person go, think of somebody whom you find difficult, or toward whom you feel a resentment, hurt, or jealousy. You may not want to pick the most difficult person in your life; instead, choose someone who is currently agitating or annoying you.

Again, offer the phrases of lovingkindness, being aware that just as you wish to be happy and free from harm, so do even the most difficult or troublesome people:

“May you be filled with lovingkindness.”
“May you be safe from inner and outer dangers.”
“May you be well in body, heart, and mind.”
“May you be at ease and happy.”

(two to three minutes of silence)

Letting this difficult person go, try to expand your well wishes as wide as you can imagine--to your family, your friends, your community, your city, your state, your country, to all beings on earth. Notice the immense depth of your own heart as you offer these phrases:

“May all beings be filled with lovingkindness.”

“May all beings be safe from inner and outer dangers.”

“May all beings be well in body, heart, and mind.”

“May all beings be at ease and happy.”

(two to three minutes of silence)

Now, letting go of all thoughts of others, return your focus to your own body, mind, and heart. Notice any discomfort, tension, or difficulty you are experiencing. Notice if you are experiencing any new lightness, warmth, relaxation, or joy. Then, whenever you are ready, allow your eyes to open and gently return your attention to the space around you.

Forgiveness Meditation

Find a comfortable but alert position in which to sit. As you allow your eyes to gently close, pay attention to the body and see if there are any minor adjustments that will help you maintain the position for the duration of the meditation. Rest your hands comfortably on your legs or in your lap.

We'll start with a few minutes of concentration practice, just to help our minds settle and arrive in our present time experience. Allow your breathing to be natural, seeing where in the body you can feel the breath most naturally. It may be in the stomach or abdomen, where you can feel the rising and falling as the body breathes. It might be in the chest, where you may notice the expansion and contraction as the body inhales and exhales. Perhaps it's at the nostrils, where you can feel a slight tickle as the air comes in, and the subtle warmth as the body exhales.

Breathing in, just bring a gentle awareness to the breath. Breathing out, be aware of the breath leaving the body.

(Pause)

You may notice the mind wandering. This offers us an opportunity to cultivate mindfulness and concentration. Each time we notice the mind wandering, we're strengthening our ability to recognize our present experience. Each time we bring the mind back to the breath, we strengthen our ability to concentrate. Treat it as an opportunity rather than a problem.

(Pause)

Now begin offering forgiveness to yourself. We start with ourselves because it is almost impossible to truly forgive others while we still harbor self-resentment.

There are many ways that we have hurt and harmed ourselves. We have betrayed or abandoned ourselves many times through thoughts, words, or actions, knowingly or unknowingly.

Feel your own precious body and life, as you are today. Let yourself become aware of the ways you have hurt or harmed yourself. Picture them, remember them. Be open to the sorrow you have carried from this and give yourself permission to release these burdens.

Breathing gently, repeat silently to yourself the following phrases:

“I forgive myself for the ways I have hurt myself through action or inaction.”

“I know I have acted out of fear, pain, and confusion, and for today, I offer myself forgiveness.”

“I forgive myself.”

Repeat these phrases, letting the feelings permeate your body and mind. Feelings contrary to

forgiveness, like irritation, guilt, and anger, may come up for you. If this happens, be patient and kind toward yourself, allowing whatever arises to be received in a spirit of friendliness and kind affection, and simply return to the phrases.

(three minutes of silence)

There are also many ways that you have been harmed by others. You may have been abused or abandoned, knowingly or unknowingly, in thoughts, words or actions.

Let yourself picture and remember these hurts. Be open to the sorrow you have carried from these actions of others in the past, and give yourself permission to release this burden of pain—at least for today—by extending forgiveness, when your heart is ready.

Bring to mind the people who have hurt you, and then silently repeat the following phrases:

“I now remember the ways you have hurt or harmed me, out of your own fear, pain, confusion and anger.”

“I have carried this pain in my heart too long. At least for today, I offer you forgiveness.”

“To all those who have caused me harm, I offer my forgiveness.”

“I forgive you.”

(three minutes of silence)

There are also many ways that we have hurt and harmed others, have betrayed or abandoned them, have caused them suffering. We have caused harm, knowingly or unknowingly, out of our own pain, fear, anger and confusion.

Let yourself remember and visualize the ways you have hurt others. Picture each memory that still burdens your heart. Acknowledge the pain you have caused out of your own fear and confusion. Be open to your own sorrow and regret. Give yourself permission to finally release this burden and ask for forgiveness.

Offer each person in your mind the following phrase:

“I know I have harmed you through my thoughts, words, or actions, and I ask for your forgiveness.”

(three minutes of silence)

Now, letting go of all thoughts of others, return your focus to your own body, mind, and heart. Notice any discomfort, tension, or difficulty you may be feeling. Notice if you are experiencing any new lightness, warmth, relaxation, relief, or joy. Then, whenever you are ready, allow your eyes to open and gently return your attention to the space around you.

Equanimity Meditation

Find a comfortable but alert position in which to sit. As you allow your eyes to gently close, pay attention to the body and see if there are any minor adjustments that will help you maintain the position for the duration of the meditation. Rest your hands comfortably on your legs or in your lap.

We'll start with a few minutes of concentration practice, just to help our minds settle and arrive in our present time experience. Allow your breathing to be natural, seeing where in the body you can feel the breath most naturally. It may be in the stomach or abdomen, where you can feel the rising and falling as the body breathes. It might be in the chest, where you may notice the expansion and contraction as the body inhales and exhales. Perhaps it's at the nostrils, where you can feel a slight tickle as the air comes in, and the subtle warmth as the body exhales.

Breathing in, just bring a gentle awareness to the breath. Breathing out, be aware of the breath leaving the body.

(Pause)

You may notice the mind wandering. This offers us an opportunity to cultivate mindfulness and concentration. Each time we notice the mind wandering, we're strengthening our ability to recognize our present experience. Each time we bring the mind back to the breath, we strengthen our ability to concentrate. Treat it as an opportunity rather than a problem.

(Pause)

In equanimity practice, we're cultivating a mind and heart that stays balanced and at ease with our surroundings. In equanimity, we come to understand that our happiness and suffering is not caused by our experiences and circumstances, but in our responses to them.

We may begin our equanimity practice by repeating the following phrases for ourselves:

"I am responsible for my own actions."

"I am responsible for the energy and attention I give my thoughts, feelings, and experiences."

"May I find a true source of happiness."

"May I find peace exactly where I am."

(two to three minutes of silence)

Now bring to mind someone who has benefitted you or been especially kind to you. This may be a loved one, a friend, a teacher or mentor. As this person comes to mind, tune into your natural desire to see this person happy, free from suffering, and at ease with life.

The practice is to recognize that although we may offer this person compassion, we are not in control of their happiness. Equanimity helps us to let go of the outcome and focus on our own practice.

Repeat silently to yourself the following phrases:

“Regardless of my wishes for you, your happiness is not in my hands.”

“All beings are responsible for the suffering or happiness created by their own actions.”

“May you find a true source of happiness.”

“May you find peace exactly where you are.”

(two to three minutes of silence)

Let this person go from your mind and bring to mind a neutral person. This is someone you see, maybe regularly, but don't know very well. It may be somebody who works somewhere you go a lot, a coworker, a person you've seen at meetings, or maybe a neighbor.

Although you don't know this person well, you can recognize that just as you wish to be happy, this person wants to be happy as well. You don't need to know what their happiness looks like. Again, offer this person the phrases of equanimity, recognizing that you aren't in charge of their happiness.

“Regardless of my wishes for you, your happiness is not in my hands.”

“All beings are responsible for the suffering or happiness created by their own actions.”

“May you do what needs to be done to find happiness.”

“May you find peace exactly where you are.”

(two to three minutes of silence)

Now, letting this neutral person go, think of somebody whom you find difficult, or toward whom you feel a resentment, hurt, or jealousy. You may not want to pick the most difficult person in your life; instead, choose someone who is currently agitating or annoying you.

Again, offer these phrases of equanimity with the intention of recognizing that they are in charge of their happiness and ease:

“Regardless of my wishes for you, your happiness is not in my hands.”

“All beings are responsible for the suffering or happiness created by their own actions.”

“May you find a true source of happiness.”

“May you find peace exactly where you are.”

(two to three minutes of silence)

Now, letting go of all thoughts of others, return your focus to your own body, mind, and heart. Notice any discomfort, tension, or difficulty you may be feeling. Notice if you are experiencing any new lightness, warmth, relaxation, or joy. Notice if you feel any increase in your ability to care without controlling; to accept that each of us is responsible for the consequences of our own actions. Then, whenever you are ready, allow your eyes to open and gently return your attention to the space around you.