The dharma teacher Guy Armstrong has said that metta practice is like running a magnet over our hearts: it pulls out all that is not metta. Thus, while our practice can certainly generate feelings of kindness, it can also bring forth resentment, anger, and even feelings of ill will. This can be confusing and perhaps distressing, particularly when we are new to the practice, but it is not a cause for concern in any way. As I remind us each week, in metta practice we don’t state our intentions and then pretend we feel that way. Rather, we state our intentions and then pay attention to how we *actually* feel. This paying attention is essential. It is at the heart of metta’s transformative potential. Furthermore, it is in itself a potent act of self-care: by acknowledging our true heart without fear or judgment, we release ourselves from the burden of trying to be someone other than who we are while simultaneously allowing the possibility of growth.

Near the end of the Metta Sutra, the Buddha refers to the “pure-hearted one” who has “clarity of vision.” Metta is a purification practice. To purify means to cleanse; to remove that which clouds our heartmind. Being pure-hearted does not mean being perfect. It means being willing and able to cultivate our limitless heart. That necessarily involves recognizing and gradually becoming willing to surrender the limits we have placed on it.

I invite you to offer metta for yourself, a person it is easy for you to appreciate, for a person with whom you have difficulty, and for all beings without exception. Do not rush to go from one category to the next!! There’s no deadline. I recommend always offering metta to yourself and then, when you genuinely experience the warmth of lovingkindness, move on to another category. If all you can do is one other category, then do it wholeheartedly. As you say the phrase, understand its meaning; do not allow it to be rote. After saying the phrase, come back and check in with the area of your heart and notice what its impact has been on your experience. Notice if any unwanted or uncomfortable feelings have arisen. If they have, just let them be. They are not a problem. If you can’t let go of the tendency to make them a problem, just let that be. Whatever comes up, meet it with good will and keep practicing. You may offer our core intentions (below), or if you wish, amend them in any way that speaks to you.

May I/you/all beings without exception be happy and content

May I/you/all beings without exception be free from harm and ill will

May I/you/all beings without exception be ealthy

May I/you/all beings without exception be live with ease, free from fear and anxiety

Continue to check in with the area of your heart and notice what the impact has been. Notice all that arises; what is metta and what is not. Greet it with good will. If your mind wanders or if you’re distracted by internal chatter, redirect your attention from the area around your head to your heart and lower body and come back to your phrases.

**Next we extend good will and lovingkindness toward someone it is easy to appreciate.** This need not be someone you know personally but someone such as an author, a teacher, or someone else who has benefited you in some way. Again, as you say the phrase, understand its meaning; do not allow it to be rote. After saying the phrase, come back and check in with the area of your heart and notice its impact. I’ll offer our core intentions, but I invite you to amend them in any way that speaks to you if you wish.

Bring this benefactor clearly to mind, either through an image or perhaps a felt sense of them.

May you be happy and content

May you be free from harm and ill will

May you be healthy

May you live with ease, free from fear and anxiety

Continue to check in with the area of your heart and notice what the impact has been. Notice all that arises; what is metta and what is not. Recognize and meet it all with good will. If your mind wanders or if you’re distracted by internal chatter, redirect your attention from the area around your head to your heart and lower body and come back to your phrases.

**Next we extend our intentions to all beings without exception.** We use the phrase “without exception” to remind ourselves that our practice is a universal, nondiscriminating caring grounded in the profound connection among all beings. We do not pick and choose who is worthy and deserving of kindness; rather, we recognize that all beings are. As you say the phrase, understand its meaning; do not allow it to be rote. After saying the phrase, come back and check in with the area of your heart and notice what the impact has been on your experience as a result of making this wish. I’ll offer our core intentions, but I invite you to amend them in any way that speaks to you if you wish.

Happy and content

Free from harm and ill will

Healthy

Live with ease, free from fear and anxiety

Check in with the area of your heart and notice what the impact has been. Notice all that arises; what is metta and what is not. Greet it with good will. If your mind wanders or if you’re distracted by internal chatter, redirect your attention from the area around your head to your heart and lower body and come back to your phrases.

**Finally, we extend these same intentions to someone with whom we have a difficulty**. Take some care in choosing this person and respect your limitations. Choose someone toward whom you can realistically offer good will right now. Bring this person clearly to mind, either through an image or perhaps a felt sense of them.

Again, as you say the phrase, understand its meaning; do not allow it to be rote. After saying the phrase, come back and check in with the area of your heart and notice what the impact has been on your experience as a result of making this wish. I’ll offer our core intentions, but I invite you to amend them in any way that speaks to you if you wish.

Please bring such a person clearly to mind.

Happy and content. Free from harm and ill will. Healthy. Live with ease, free from fear and anxiety.

Check in with the area of your heart and notice what the impact has been. Notice all that arises; what is metta and what is not. Greet it with good will. If your mind wanders or if you’re distracted by internal chatter, redirect your attention from the area around your head to your heart and lower body and come back to your phrases.

As we bring our morning to a close, I invite you to visualize the person it is easy for you to appreciate wishing you lovingkindness. Or, if you are able, visualize the person with whom you have some difficulty offering you lovingkindness. Express the intention to treasure and protect the good will in your heart so you can give it away at every opportunity.

If your eyes are closed etc