

The Buddhist nun Ayya Khema was a dedicated practitioner and teacher of metta and metta meditation. The primary way she taught guided metta meditation was through visualization. The following meditations are adapted from her book *The Path to Peace—A Buddhist Guide to Cultivating Lovingkindness* (Shambala books, 2022). I have abridged them for length purposes only.

Please note: Memorizing the words of this visualization is not important; what's important is to *experience* the warmth and expansion they encourage. Take care not to get so wrapped up in the imagery that you fail to embody its message. Take whatever time you need to first direct the visualization toward yourself and settle into a sense of confidence in your own true heart, your innate goodness beyond any woundedness you've experienced, and your steadfast good will toward yourself. When you've experienced this tenderness toward yourself, extend good will and lovingkindness outward to others.

—TCS

The Golden Light

Please spend whatever time you need to become settled into your body in a relaxed and alert posture. Putting attention on the breath can help quiet the mind and become settled.

Imagine that we have a beautiful white lotus flower growing in our heart, nourished by the purity of love, good will and compassion. It opens all its petals until it's fully open. Out of the center of this beautiful flower comes a golden stream of light that fills us from head to toe with warmth, beauty, contentment, and surrounds us with the feeling of love, well-being, and a feeling of being protected.

We let the golden stream of light from the center of our hearts reach out to the person who is most directly nearby to us and fill them with the warmth and joy that comes from our hearts. We surround them with love, providing a sense of well-being and security.

We let the golden stream of light from the center of our hearts reach out to anyone in our awareness who is physically nearby with the warmth and joy from our hearts. We surround everyone with good will, so that each person feels a sense of well-being a protection.

Now we think of our parents, whether they're still alive or not, and we let the golden stream of light from the center of our hearts reach out to their hearts, fill them with warmth, joy and gratitude.

We think of those people who are nearest and dearest to us. We let the golden stream of light from the center of our hearts reach out to them. We fill them from head to toe with the warmth and joy and contentment and surround them with good will and love without expecting the same in return.

We direct our attention to all our good friends. The golden stream of light from the center of our hearts reaches out to them, bringing them our friendship, warmth, care and good will.

Now we think of all the people who are part of our daily life, such as neighbors, colleagues at work, people on our street, in the shops or offices, those we meet on our travels. we let the golden stream of light from the center of our hearts reach out to all these people and fill them with our warmth, care and good will.

We think of any person in our life whom we either dislike or are indifferent to. Then we let the golden stream of light from the center of our hearts reach out to that person, filling them with our good will so that no blockage remains in our own heart.

Now we let the golden stream of light from the center of our hearts reach out to people near and far, taking our good will, love, care and warmth to as many people as possible, to those physically near us, those in our city or town, to cities and towns all over the nation, across the oceans to other lands and other peoples. We circle the globe with a golden stream of light, touching people's hearts as far as the strength of our love will permit.

We now direct our attention on ourselves and once again let the golden stream of light from the center of our hearts fill us from head to toe with warmth, light and joy and surround us with love and contentment, experiencing unconditional positive regard for ourselves.

Now we let the golden stream of light go back inside the lotus flower, which closes its petals. Then we anchor this beautiful flower in our hearts so that we become one with it.

May all beings be happy and peaceful.

The Flower Garden

Imagine that we have a beautiful garden of flowers growing in our hearts with exquisite blooms, lovely fragrance, growing and being cared for through our love and compassion. We can enjoy the garden and all the lovely flowers in it and feel at ease, a sense of well-being, within the flower garden of our hearts.

Now we'll cut a beautiful bouquet of those flowers, the loveliest we can find, and "hand it" to someone who is physically nearby, expressing our good will and care through this gift.

Think of our parents, whether they're still alive or not, and make a beautiful bouquet out of the flowers in our hearts and hand that to them with our love and gratitude. See the joy it brings to them.

Now think of those people who are nearest and dearest to us, and for each of them we will make a bouquet of flowers from the garden in our heart, nourished by our love and good will, in all different colors with lovely fragrance. Give each of them the gift that comes from our heart and don't expect anything in return.

Now think of all our good friends, relatives, acquaintances, anyone who comes to mind. For each of them, we'll make a beautiful bouquet of flowers from the garden in our heart, nourished by our love, cared for by compassion and we give this gift to each one of them, showing them our care.

Now think of those people whom we meet in our daily lives: people we work with, neighbors, students, teachers, patients, salespeople, postal carriers, anyone who comes to mind. Realize that the more flowers we give away, the more grow in our hearts. We can make a bouquet for each of these people—the loveliest blooms we can find—and we can give them the gift that comes straight from our hearts.

Now think of a difficult person in our lives, or, if we don't have one, someone we are indifferent toward, whom we neither like nor dislike, or the one we reject and resist, or who rejects us. Again, we cut a beautiful bouquet of flowers out of the garden of our heart and hand it to that person with good will, care and respect. See the joy it produces and the relief we feel.

We'll open our heart as wide as possible and extend the flower garden to its largest possible degree and then allow people to enter and enjoy the beautiful flowers, and each one takes one home with them. Each one who comes takes one of the beautiful blooms and a new one grows in its place.

We might think of all the people we have met anywhere at any time, seen anywhere at any time, or heard about, and let them all enter and take away with them a beautiful flower from the garden of our hearts. As we open our heart evermore and the garden becomes larger and larger, we can let all the living beings we can think of enter, be happy, and enjoy a sense of belonging as we give them a flower out of the garden.

Now we direct attention back on ourselves as we see that the flower garden in our heart is unimpaired; there are just as many blooms there as there were to start with. Giving them away has not diminished them, and their fragrance and beauty bring joy to our hearts. We feel a sense of well-being, of being surrounded by good will and love.

We now anchor that flower garden in our hearts so that we have access to it at any time and never lose it.

May people everywhere become aware of the beautiful flowers in their own hearts.