

FORGIVENESS MEDITATION

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Find a comfortable place to sit. Relax into the sitting posture. Take a few moments to settle into the position by intentionally releasing any held tension in your face, neck, shoulders, chest, or abdomen. Bring your attention to the present moment through the breath awareness practice.

Pause

After settling into the present-time experience of sitting with awareness of the breath, allow the breath to come and go from your heart's center. Imagine breathing directly in and out of your heart. Feel what is present in your heart-mind and begin to set your intention to let go of the past through letting go of resentments. Say the word *forgiveness* in your mind and acknowledge how it feels to consider letting go.

Pause

When you are ready, bring to mind some of the ways that you have harmed others, have betrayed or abandoned them. Include both the intentional and unintentional acts of harm you have participated in. Acknowledge and feel the anger, pain, fear, or confusion that motivated your actions.

Begin to ask for forgiveness from those you have harmed:

I ask for your forgiveness.

Please forgive me for having caused you harm.

I now understand that I was unskillful and that my actions hurt you, and I ask for your forgiveness.

Pause between each phrase, bringing attention to your heart/mind/body's reactions to these practices. Feel the feelings that arise, or the lack of feeling. Acknowledge the desire to be forgiven.

If the mind gets too lost in the story and begins rationalizing and blaming, simply bring your attention back to the breath and body in the present moment, then continue repeating the phrases:

I ask for your forgiveness.

Pause

Please forgive me for having caused you harm.

Pause

I now understand that I was unskillful and that my actions hurt you, and I ask for your forgiveness.

Pause

Spend some time repeating these phrases and reflecting on your past unskillfulness, remembering to soften your belly when it gets tight with judgment or fear.

Relax back into breathing in and out of your heart's center. Take a few moments to let go of the last aspect of the exercise. Then begin to reflect on all the ways in which you have been harmed in this lifetime. Remember that you are attempting to forgive the actors, not the actions, and that just as you have been confused and unskillful at times, those you have hurt you were also suffering or confused. Bring to mind and invite back into your heart those who have caused you harm. With as much mercy and compassion as possible, begin offering forgiveness to those who have harmed you, those whom you have been holding resentment toward, with these same phrases:

I forgive you.

Pause

I forgive you for all the ways that you have caused me harm.

Pause

I now offer you forgiveness, whether the hurt came through your actions, thoughts, or words.

Pause

I know you are responsible for your actions, and I offer you forgiveness.

Pause between each phrase, bringing attention to your heart/mind/body's reactions to these practices. Feel the feelings that arise, or the lack of feeling. Acknowledge the desire to forgive. If the mind gets too lost in the

story and begins rationalizing and blaming, simply bring the attention back to the breath and body in the present moment, then begin repeating the phrases:

I forgive you.

Pause

I forgive you for all the ways that you have caused me harm.

Pause

I now offer you forgiveness, whether the hurt came through your actions, thoughts, or words.

Pause

I know you are responsible for your actions, and I offer you forgiveness.

2 minutes of silence

Now let go of the phrases and bring your attention back to your direct experience of the present moment, feel the breath as it comes and goes, soften the belly, and relaxing into the present. Attempt to let go of let go of the reflection on those who have harmed you relaxing back into the experience of your breath at the heart's center.

Pause

When you are ready, begin to reflect on yourself. Acknowledge all the ways that you have harmed yourself. Contemplate your life and your thoughts, feelings, and actions toward yourself. Allow heartfelt experience of the judgmental and critical feelings you carry toward yourself. Just as you have harmed others, there are so many ways that we have hurt ourselves. We have betrayed and abandoned ourselves many times, though our thoughts, words and deeds -sometimes intentionally, often unintentionally.

Pause

Begin to feel the physical and mental experience of sorrow and grief for yourself and the confusion in your life. Breathing into each moment, with each feeling that arises, soften your belly and begin to invite yourself back into your heart. Allow forgiveness to arise. Picture yourself now, or at any

time in your life, and reflect on all the ways in which you judged, criticized, and caused emotional or physical harm to yourself. With as much mercy and compassion as possible begin to offer yourself forgiveness, perhaps picturing yourself as a child and inviting the disowned aspects of yourself back into your heart:

I forgive you.

Pause

I forgive myself for all the ways I have caused myself harm.

Pause

I now offer myself forgiveness, whether the hurt came through my actions, thoughts or words.

Pause

I know I am responsible for my actions, and I now offer myself forgiveness.

2 minutes of silence

Pause between each phrase, bringing your attention to your heart/mind/body's reactions to these practices. Feel the feelings that arise, or lack of feeling. Acknowledge the desire to forgive yourself.

If the mind gets to lost in the story and begins rationalizing and blaming, simply bring the attention back to the breath and body in the present moment, then begin repeating the phrases

I forgive you.

I forgive myself for all the ways I have caused myself harm.

I now offer myself forgiveness, whether the hurt came through my actions, thoughts or words.

I know I am responsible for my actions, and I now offer myself forgiveness.

2 minutes of silence

Now send yourself a moment of gratitude for trying to free yourself the long-held resentments that makes life more difficult than it need to be.

1 minute of silence

When you are ready, allow your eyes to open and attention to come back into the room

(Ring Bell)