



IMAGINING FLOURISHING AND KINDNESS: A MINDFULNESS PRACTICE FOR ADULTS

"Reconnect to what makes you happy and brings you Joy."

—Susan C. Young

OVERVIEW

A mindfulness practice that helps you to envision a sense of deep well-being, extend loving-kindness to yourself, and imagine how you might "show up" in the world—with greater compassion and openness.

PLANNING FOR IT

WHEN YOU MIGHT USE THIS PRACTICE

- Any time during the year
- Before the school day begins
- At a time when you are feeling emotional distress
- Before you work with a challenging student or colleague
- At the start of a staff meeting or professional development session

TIME REQUIRED

- 9 minutes

LEVEL

- College
- Adult

MATERIALS

- A quiet place for mindfulness practice

- Learning Objectives
- You will:
- Practice envisioning greater well-being and support from others
- Mentally extend kindness to yourself
- Imagine how you might bring more compassion to your students, family, and community

ADDITIONAL SUPPORTS

- [Making Classrooms and Schools Trauma-Informed and Healing-Centered](#)

SEL COMPETENCIES

- Self-Awareness
- Self-Management
- Social Awareness

HOW TO DO IT

REFLECTION BEFORE THE PRACTICE

- Consider what you need to experience greater well-being, What supports and sustains you?
- Now, take a moment to reflect on the lives of your students and colleagues. Who might benefit most from your attention and/or kindness?
- If sharing this practice in a staff meeting, course, or professional development session, be sure to try it yourself first.

INSTRUCTIONS

GETTING STARTED

- Find a quiet place where you can sit, stand, or lie down, whichever is most comfortable.
- Close your eyes (or keep them open), whichever you prefer.
- Play the following audio recording:

MP3 link: <https://soundcloud.com/user-877205336-555180076/meditation-for-imagining-flourishing-and-kindness>

THE PRACTICE

This meditation is on imagining flourishing and kindness.

For this next practice, you can use any position that's comfortable—sitting, lying down, or standing.

Let's begin by noticing sensations in our bodies right now, as they are.

Noticing sensations that may be tight.

Noticing sensations that might feel tingly or warm.

Bringing the full force of our attention and awareness to just noticing the sensations of the body.

[PAUSE]

Keep noticing.

Maybe these sensations shift and move,

Maybe certain areas have more sensation: around the eyes.

Maybe wherever the hands are resting, or the feet.

Couple more breaths here.

Just settling in, stabilizing.

[PAUSE]

As we shift into this practice, we consider, first of all--what does it feel like to be truly flourishing?

Not just momentarily joyful, but a feeling of deep well-being and contentment.

We use our mind and imagination to consider what this feels like.

It's possible that a memory or image may rise to the surface, or words.

Something we associate with this feeling of deep-seated contentment.

Maybe it feels far away or foreign, that's okay too.

What *would* it feel like to have deep-seated contentment?

How *would* that feel?

[PAUSE]

And now with our breath, we take this memory, this image, this idea, or imagination

And create it into a real *intention*.

And with our inhale, drawing in this idea of our own flourishing and contentment.

And with our exhale, may we find this joy, this contentment, this happiness—here and now.

Inhale, drawing in.

Exhale, extending this wish of loving-kindness to ourselves.

Twice more on the rhythm of your own breath, drawing in this heartfelt aspiration of our own flourishing—and extending it out.

[PAUSE]

When we think of this kind of flourishing, this true deep-seated well-being we recognize there are factors from the world that support this:

Situations and circumstances, people, resources.

Bring to mind that which would most support you in sustaining your well-being and flourishing.

Some of these things may already be present and others, which are needed.

Bring these to mind and reflect on them.

Once again, we'll use our breath.

First, through our inhale, bring to mind these aspects of our world that could most support us in our deep-seated well-being.

And then exhale with this aspiration.

"May the world meet me and my desire for sustained flourishing and contentment."

"May I receive what I want and need."

Inhale, drawing in this clear image and idea of what is needed.

Exhale, extending a wish that we could find it.

Continuing for two more breaths.

And moving on, continuing to strengthen this imaginative capacity of our own well-being, we consider what is it that we need from ourselves to sustain this flourishing and well-being?

What are the skills or habits we need to learn or unlearn?

What would most fully support us in sustaining deep-seated well-being—flourishing?

Again, some of these may be capacities or qualities we already have and others which we need to strengthen.

Bring these vividly to mind.

And with our next breath, inhale, drawing in that which is needed to support us.

Exhale, *"May I find the strength, the courage, and the integrity to support my own flourishing and well-being."*

Inhale, drawing in.

Exhale, extending out this aspiration—for our own well-being.

And twice more on the rhythm of your own breath.

Drawing in this heartfelt aspiration.

Exhale, extending...

"May I meet myself and sustain this vision of deep seated well-being and kindness."

And now shifting our attention towards how we would most like to show up in the world.

What are the qualities we would like to bring to our interactions and exchanges?

How would we like to be of service?

Reflect and consider: What are the ways in which we really can show up completely—with compassion, openness?

Maybe we have a memory or image of what this is like—through our interactions with others—colleagues, students, family members, or friends.

Our engagement with the world, and with others is a critical part of our well-being.

So using our breath, we draw in with this clear image and idea of how we would like to show up in the world.

And exhale, *"May I be of service. May I show up. May the qualities most needed be present in my interactions with the world."*

Inhale, drawing in this heartfelt aspiration.

And exhale, extending out.

Just one more time--inhaling and exhaling.

Now, releasing all thoughts, memories, and images.
And simply noticing how the body and the mind feel right now.

Finding the breath—and closing with three long inhales and three long exhales.

REFLECTION AFTER THE PRACTICE

- What are you feeling at this moment?
- Do you feel more compassion for yourself?
- Do you feel connected to your school--and your community?

THE RESEARCH BEHIND THE PRACTICE

EVIDENCE THAT IT WORKS

Studies indicate that people who practice loving-kindness for just a few weeks can experience an increase in [self-compassion](#) and [positive emotions](#), and relief from [depression, anxiety, and chronic pain](#).

In addition, this type of mindfulness practice may be one of the most effective ways for increasing [empathy](#) and [compassion for others](#). In fact, one study's findings suggest that it can even play a role in decreasing [bias](#) towards stigmatized groups.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Unlike other mindfulness practices that focus more on developing awareness and attention, this practice is also deeply relational—so it can help you to develop more positive relationships with your students and colleagues, potentially leading to a more positive school climate.

When you practice loving-kindness, you learn to extend love and care to yourself first—and then to others. Ultimately, you may reap the benefits of greater self-awareness and self-compassion, but you may also feel more energy to meet students and colleagues where they are—and to extend care to them with a more open heart.

SOURCE

Eve Ekman, PhD

Senior Fellow at the Greater Good Science Center