



# LOVING-KINDNESS FOR SOMEONE YOU CARE ABOUT

*"If you want others to be happy, practice compassion. If you want to be happy, practice compassion."*

*—Dalai Lama*

## OVERVIEW

Encourage students' feelings of loving-kindness by focusing on an easy target—someone they care about; then ask them to offer kindness to themselves.

## PLANNING FOR IT

### WHEN YOU MIGHT USE THIS PRACTICE

- Daily or weekly
- At the start of a school day, to close a class, during a classroom meeting, or as part of an advisory program
- When your students are experiencing tension, anger, or anxiety

### TIME REQUIRED

- 10-15 minutes

### LEVEL

- Upper Elementary
- Middle School
- High School

### MATERIALS

- None

## LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Students will:

- Practice acknowledging commonalities with another person and send positive wishes to that person

## ADDITIONAL SUPPORTS

- [Making Practices Culturally Responsive](#)
- [Adapting Practices for Students with Special Needs](#)
- [Making a Practices Trauma-Informed](#)
- [Making Classrooms and Schools Trauma-Informed and Healing-Centered](#)

## SEL COMPETENCIES

- Self-Awareness
- Self-Management
- Social Awareness
- Relationship Skills

## HOW TO DO IT

### REFLECTION BEFORE THE PRACTICE

Take a few deep breaths and consider a colleague, friend, family member, or student you care about. Take a moment to mentally wish that person well. How do you feel after doing this exercise? If you like, you may also try this [Loving-Kindness Meditation](#) that includes a script and audio recording.

### INSTRUCTIONS

#### GETTING STARTED

- Tell students that they will be thinking about someone who makes them happy, and then they will practice sending kind wishes to that person (and to themselves, too).
- Ask them:
  - *Have you ever tried to send good wishes to someone you care about? How did it make you feel?*
  - *What about sending good wishes to yourself? Was that more challenging? How did that make you feel?*
- Play the audio recording for your students, or lead them through the practice with the transcript below.

<https://soundcloud.com/user-877205336-555180076/loving-kindness-for-someone-you-care-about>

#### THE PRACTICE

- *Get into a comfortable position either sitting on the cushion or lying down. Fully or partially close your eyes and take a few deep breaths to settle into your body and into the present moment.*
- *Bringing to mind a living being you care about or someone who naturally makes you smile. Someone with whom you have a comfortable and easy relationship—not necessarily a “perfect” relationship, because of course there’s no such thing as a “perfect” relationship, but someone who just brings a lightness to your heart when you think of them. This could be a child you know, your grandparent, your cat or dog—whoever naturally brings happiness to your heart. If you can’t decide between a couple of people, just choose one.*
- *Letting yourself feel what it’s like to be in that being’s presence. Creating a vivid image of this being in your mind. Allowing yourself to enjoy the good company.*
- *Now recognize how this being wishes to be happy and free from struggles, just like you and every other living being. Repeating these phrases silently to yourself, for the other being, feeling the importance of your words:*
  - *May you be happy.*
  - *May you feel loved.*
  - *May you begin to accept yourself just as you are. (Repeat twice, slowly)*
- *When you notice that your mind has wandered, returning to the words and the image of this being that you care about. Savoring any warm feelings that may arise. Taking your time.*
- *Now adding yourself to your circle of warm wishes. Creating an image of yourself in the presence of the person you care about, visualizing you both together. Repeating the phrases for both of you.*
  - *May we be happy.*
  - *May we feel loved.*
  - *May we begin to accept ourselves just as we are.*

*(Repeat twice, slowly; pause.)*

- *Now letting go of the image of the other, and letting the full focus of your attention rest directly on yourself. Putting your hand over your heart and feeling the warmth and gentle pressure of your hand. Visualizing your whole body in your mind, noticing any stress or uneasiness that may be lingering within you, and offering yourself the phrases:*
  - *May I be happy.*
  - *May I feel loved.*
  - *May I begin to accept myself just as I am.*

*(Repeat twice, slowly, pause.)*

- *Finally taking a few breaths and just resting quietly in your own body, accepting whatever your experience is, exactly as it is. You may be feeling warm wishes and compassion, or you may not; it doesn’t matter. We are simply setting our intention to open our hearts and seeing what happens.*

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## CLOSURE

Ask students to reflect on this practice:

- *What was it like to repeat these warm wishes to this being you care about?*
- *What happened when you added yourself to the circle? And then what happened when you let go of the other being—and it was just yourself left in the circle of warm wishes?*
- *How did this practice make you feel? When could you try this practice again? Why?*

## REFLECTION AFTER THE PRACTICE

How did you and your students respond to this practice? Do you observe them expressing more positive emotions? More tension?

## THE RESEARCH BEHIND THE PRACTICE

### EVIDENCE THAT IT WORKS

This practice, which is part of the Mindful Self-Compassion (MSC) [program](#) for teens, prompts students to foster their natural capacity for kindness by encouraging good wishes and compassion (“I want you to be happy”).

In a [pilot study](#) of this program, teens reported decreases in depression, stress, and negative feelings after completing a six-session course, while students in a similar [study](#) reported greater resilience, gratitude, and a willingness to take on new challenges.

### WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Researchers have discovered that toddlers as young as 14-months demonstrate a [natural capacity for kindness](#), but this capacity must be nurtured through healthy relationships with adults and peers—the foundation of a positive school climate.

Studies have found that kind students who are [well-liked by their peers](#) are helpful, cooperative, and emotionally well-adjusted. In addition, students who show kindness at a young age achieve [greater academic and social success](#) in the long-run.

## SOURCE

[Making Friends with Yourself](#), Karen Bluth, Ph.D.