

FINDING LOVING-KINDNESS PHRASES

This is a pen and paper exercise rather than an informal practice for use in daily life. The exercise is designed to help you discover loving-kindness and compassion phrases that are deeply meaningful to you. If you already have phrases and wish to continue using them, you can try this exercise as an experiment but please don't feel you need to find new phrases.

To start, please close your eyes, put a hand over your heart or elsewhere, and feel your body gently breathe.

What Do I Need?

- Take a moment, allowing your heart to gently open. You can imagine your heart opening like a flower in the warm sun – opening to itself.

- Then asking yourself the question, *“What do I need? What do I truly need?”*

If this need has not been fulfilled in a given day, your day is not complete.

Let the answer be a *universal* human need such as the need to be *connected, kind, peaceful, free*. Give yourself time to allow one or more words to arise naturally within you.

- When you are ready, please *open your eyes* and write down what you, as a person, really need.
- If you wish, you can translate your needs into *wishes for yourself*, such as,
 - *“May I feel connected to others”*
 - *“May I be kind to myself”*
 - *“May I live in peace”*
 - *“May I be free”*

Or you can use the word or words just as they arose in your mind

What Do I Long to Hear?

- Now, closing your eyes again and asking yourself these questions:

“What do I long to hear from others?”

“What words do I long to hear spoken to me because, as a person, I really need to hear words like this?”

“If I could, what words would I like to have whispered into my ear every day for the rest of my life -- words that would fill me with gratitude every time I hear them? Inside I would feel, ‘Oh, thank you...thank you...thank you’”

Open the door of your heart and wait for words to come. Have courage. Listen.

- Now gently *open your eyes again* and take a moment to write down what you heard.

If you heard a lot of words, see if you can make the words into a short phrase—a message to yourself.

- Words that we long to hear from others are often qualities that we wish to actualize in our own lives, or attitudes that we wish to know for sure. They are subtle wishes for ourselves. For example, longing to hear “I love you” means that we wish to know that we are lovable.