

Lovingkindness Meditation for Oppressive Experiences

Recall a time you can remember feeling that you were devalued by another, not because of something you did or didn't do, but because of some aspect of who you are. There may be many experiences, but try to focus in on one. Allow yourself to recall how you reacted to this situation, as you remember the details of the situation. What aspect of your identity were you aware of: gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, some other characteristic, or some combination of these? Was there a person you were interacting with? Or was it a societal message? Or a disparity or inequity that you experienced?

Notice in your body right now any sensations even if you haven't yet identified a specific situation. What does the word "oppression" feel like? What are your physical sensations, images, feelings, or thought reactions to that word? Perhaps there is a feeling of resistance, of not wanting to go to such a place. Try just breathing into that feeling. Stay with noticing, seeing if other feelings or thoughts and physical sensations emerge.

****Now recalling that oppressive experience, say to yourself:**

"This is a moment of difficulty, of suffering, or discomfort." Notice how your body responds to this acknowledgment.

"There are others who are like me who have had similar experiences." "I am not alone in having this experience."

**Then place your hand over your heart, and feel the warmth of your hand comforting your heart. How does your body respond? Breathe in the following phrases:

"May I find some sense of safety in this moment."

"May I feel strong in this moment."

"May I feel worthiness even as I am devalued by others."

"May I find some breathing space when I feel constrained by inequality so that I can respond creatively."

What other comforting wishes do you have for yourself in this situation?

Repeat these phrases again and notice how your being responds to each one.

****Now bring to mind another person you know who has had a similar type of oppressive experience and picture the two of you standing together. And surrounding you, try picturing all the many individuals who have faced this type of discrimination.**

"May we feel safe when we have such challenging experiences."

"May we feel strong in the face of adversity."

"May we feel worthiness even when others devalue us."

“May we find some space to respond creatively when we feel constrained.”

What other comforting wishes do you want to send to this larger group?

Notice how it feels to say these phrases for the larger community as compared to just yourself.

****Now picture all those who have felt oppressed at some time in their life:**

“May we feel safe when we have such challenging experiences.”

“May we feel strong in the face of adversity.”

"May we feel worthiness even when other devalue us."

“May we find some space to respond creatively when we feel constrained.”

Notice how it feels to say these phrases for this larger group as compared to your smaller demographic group.

Now just bring your awareness back to your breath right now and check in with how your body is feeling at this moment in time. What sensations have shifted? What have remained? Are there additional thoughts or feelings you are experiencing now?