

Queer Lovingkindness Meditation

One time the Buddha told some monks to meditate in the forest. At night the monks heard sounds - the tree spirits tried to scare them. The monks got scared and went back to the Buddha, told what happened and he taught them loving-kindness meditation. The monks went back to the forest and meditated - and the tree spirits were so moved by the love radiating from the monks that they accepted the monks and took care of them while they meditated.

The story goes on. For more than 2600 years Asian communities used those techniques to deal with their inner demons and deal with trauma, especially if they had to flee from the place where they lived. And yes, we all know that inner demons: fear, anger, hatred and so on. If you look closely at them those demons are just thoughts and emotions. Most of the time they deal with the past or the future. But they appear so real in this moment so that they can control our lives. And this is dangerous. The Buddha taught many kinds of meditation that help to reduce or overcome mental suffering. Today we practice loving-kindness meditation.

We are sitting here on a chair. It is good to sit at the edge of the seat and to have a stable position. Our eyes are closed or half-open. Many people with strong emotions prefer not to close the eyes.

We start observing our breath. Just breathe naturally. And from time to time your thoughts will wander. This is not bad. If you realize it, just come back to your breath gently.

Then think of a situation where you were happy because you did someone a favour. Perhaps you helped an older person crossing the road, hold a door for someone open. And you saw that this made this person happy for a short moment. And you realized that this made you happy.

And you feel this in your heart. Try to explore the feeling and keep it in your heart.

Then you direct this feeling to the person who is next to you and say to to this person in your mind:

May you be safe.
May you be happy.
May you be well.
May you find peace.

Then think of all the people here in this group. Many of them fight with problems in their daily lives. Please say to all here in your mind:

May you be safe.
May you be happy.
May you be well.
May you find peace.

Now think of someone you really like. See him or her in your mind and wish him:

May you be safe.
May you be happy.
May you be well.
May you find peace.

Now think of someone you don't like. And yes, this person might be problematic. But his problems are not that similar to ours. Maybe he also is a victim of negative emotions. And say to this person:

May you be safe.
May you be happy.
May you be well.
May you find peace.

Now think of persons in your daily life: a German teacher, the person at the store who sells food. All of them do an important job. We think of the people who do voluntary work for the queer community and work voluntarily at places like Bar jeder Sicht. And wish them:

May you be safe.
May you be happy.
May you be well.
May you find peace.

Now think of all people in Mainz, whether you know them or not. They all have deep in their hearts only the wish of being safe, healthy and happy. Especially in the queer community there is still much suffering. So wish them:

May you be safe.
May you be happy.
May you be well.
May you find peace.

Our feeling of loving-kindness gets bigger and bigger. Now we think of all people in Germany and even more, all people in Europe. We think of the people in Ukraine who are suffering a lot. We think of queer people in states like Poland and Hungary, which are hostile towards them. We wish them all:

May you all be safe.
May you all be happy.
May you all be well.
May you all find peace.

Our feeling for compassion is boundless. We think of all people in the world, especially the ones in hospitals and refugee camps. We think of all queer people, marginalized groups and women who are suffering in the world. But we also think of beings like animals who are dying because nature gets destroyed. We wish them:

May you all be safe.
May you all be happy.
May you all be well.
May you all find peace.

Now direct your attention to ourselves. You also deserve to be safe and to be accepted and loved. Especially many queer persons don't get the love and support they deserve. So please say to yourself:

May I be safe.
May I be happy.
May I be well.
May I find peace.

After this short mediation I would like to know: What did you feel? Was there especially one group that was difficult to wish to experience loving-kindness?

Some closing remarks. You can use this and other meditation techniques whenever you define yourself as Buddhist not. They are made for everyone to cultivate your mind and positive emotions. But you should try to practice them regularly. It is like with a gym: doing a workout one time won't strengthen your body. I find it important to mention that this meditation wasn't invented in Europe - it came from Asia from people who had to leave their countries.

Training to embody loving-kindness meditation doesn't mean that we have to be kind all the time. Sometimes fear is very useful and warns us and can save our lives. So we want to befriend with ourselves and even with negative emotions. Let them do their job and warn us, but don't let them control our lives. It is like the tree-spirits which I mentioned at the beginning. They won't go away - but we have to learn to live with them and slowly to transform them into something helpful and beautiful.