

The Courage of the Heart –Living the Brahmaviharas- Home practices*

Please Have FUN with the Home practices & your buddy groups! **Next class 3/13**

1. **Sit every day.** Try sitting for a minimum of 15-30 minutes per day (more if you are able). Please practice your meditation in silence. **(Those newer to practice try 10 minutes a day - & check out CIMC'S Beginner Drop-in, Way of Awareness). Begin your meditation with 5 minutes of loving-kindness towards yourself. Notice how it affects the rest of your meditation?**

2. **Gratitude Practices:**
Write down 3 things you are grateful for each day. Can be anything. When Buddies are assigned: Text or Email them, 3 things you are grateful for each day.

- 3) ****Read the Brahmavihara sheet once a day** (placed at the end of this home practice).

- 4) **Meet with your Buddy Group (see reflections and practices)**

- 5) **Metta or holistic kindness: Metta is the Pali word which translates as loving kindness, friendliness, holistic kindness.** It is an all-inclusive befriending, a fearless kindness, an open-heartedness, love as care, benevolence, empathy. It is a radical shift in our way of being present and rests upon a **dedicated** intentional practice. A heart-mind abiding in kindness. The Buddha described this way of being in the world as an attitudinal commitment we can bring to all moments, situations, relationships in our lives-including ourselves! **Be open with a friendly heart to yourself and to everyone. Remember: Metta is a deep friendship with life.**
 - a) **To Begin:**
 - Recognize this quality.
 - Get to know it. See it clearly. Investigate it.
 - When Loving Kindness is present, we want to highlight it.
 - *Or notice the absence of ill will or aversion-* (i.e. when you are at ease- **see this absence as metta**)
 - b) **Then, Continue:**
 - Pay attention when meeting people throughout the day.
 - Notice when Loving Kindness arises & when it doesn't.
 - *What obstructs Loving Kindness when it does not arise?*
 - c) **Next, go deeper:**
 - Notice when attachment is present with Loving Kindness.
 - Notice when expectations are also present with Loving Kindness.
 - How does this feel?

- *How are these mixed feelings are different from Loving Kindness?*

6) **Metta: Reflections & Practices: (Talk these over with Buddies)**

a. **Reflections: Some from class**

- **Reflect on:** *some of the significant acts of goodwill or loving kindness that you have offered to yourself. What made these significant for you? How did they make you feel? Did they motivate you in any way? What did you learn from experiencing these acts of goodwill toward yourself?*
- **Reflect on:** *some of the significant acts of goodwill or loving kindness that you received from others. What made these significant for you? How did they make you feel? Did they motivate you in any way? What did you learn from experiencing these acts of goodwill?*
- **Reflect on:** *some of the more significant acts of good will or loving kindness that you have offered to others. What made these significant to you? How did you feel doing them? What did you learn from doing them?*
- **Notice in daily life:** *When your heart is at ease, in connection wit life. Take the great risk to love life. Love life while walking your dog, exercising, shopping, talking to a neighbor, and waiting in lines. Wherever we are, whatever we are doing...we can be silently cultivating an intention of kindness and good will.*

b. **PICK 2 practices from the list below for 2 weeks. Try 2 more for the next 2 weeks. Share what you learned with your assigned buddy group.**

- **Practice: Seeing yourself with Kindness-** *If only we could see what others see, it would be easier to be kind to ourselves- what would you see if you tried looking at yourself through the eyes of someone who cares about you or loves you? Practice this this week. Recall the lovely qualities this person sees in you. (No buts!) And Take in the caring or love. We are all good enough. Goodness is inside of you!*
- **Practice: What you like-** *Spend 3-5 minutes in front of a mirror looking at the image in front of you. Notice any judgments, reactions. Instead of feeding them, acknowledge them and let them go. In a heartfelt way, say aloud to yourself at least 3 good qualities you have. Like, “ You really care about others”, “You are funny”, “You love your children, or pet(s).” Don’t try too hard- A glimpse of appreciation is great!*
- **Practice: Being present for all the acts of kindness that come your way each day.** *Someone in your house hugs you, take in the kindness. Your pet cuddles or licks you- take in the kindness & love- your co-worker expresses appreciation- Be there for it. When a friend greets you with delight on, phone, in person they are communicating their kindness and caring for you. Don’t miss it. A stranger holds a*

door for you or someone waves as you pass them on the street- that is communication filled with warmth & friendliness- feel it, look for small and large expressions of kindness

- **Practice: Taking kindness and caring-** Cultivating kindness for ourselves. Kindness is taking good care of your body, heart mind, nourishing them with healthy foods, exercise, rest, quiet time, creative self-expression, play, etc. Do it out of kindness and love instead of obligation- appreciating, loving & caring for yourself ***–Is it possible to speak kindly to yourself?***
- **Practice: Being aware of moments when something good expresses itself through you-**an intention-an action of kindness or compassion. Such as: calling a distressed friend, to make food for a sick friend, to offer help a neighbor, co-worker, to give a donation etc.

*****The Brahmaviharas (sheet): (Divine abodes, divine homes)** By reflecting & practicing these qualities in your life & in meditations, you can establish the *brahmaviharas* as your home. The *brahmaviharas* are a gift of love that the Buddha himself realized & embodied. This is an opportunity to practice this path by which we learn to develop skillful intentions, attitudes, mental states & let go of unskillful ones. Cultivating an awakened life means aligning ourselves with a vast vision of what is possible for us. The *brahmaviharas* are tools for sustaining our experience of that vision.

- **Loving kindness (*metta*):** friendliness, unconditional warmth, caring. *Metta* is a generosity of heart that wishes well-being, happiness to all beings. (Including yourself) The practice of *metta* uncovers the force of love that that can uproot fear, anger, guilt, The culmination of *metta* is to become a friend to oneself and to all of life.
Near enemy, a quality that looks like *metta* but isn't, is attachment;
Far enemy, the opposite, is hatred.
- **Compassion (*karuna*):** described as a quivering, tenderness of the heart in response to suffering. It is the strong feeling of wanting to alleviate pain & suffering. Compassion is born out of the wisdom of seeing things as they are. Compassion also arises from the practice of inclining the mind, of refining our intention.
Near enemy is pity.
Far enemy is cruelty.
- **Appreciative joy (*mudita*):** joy that is filled with contentment & depends upon our capacity to take delight. We rejoice when we see others happy, we rejoice in their happiness & their well-being becomes our own. Rather than believing that happiness is a limited commodity and the more there is for somebody else, the less there's going to be for us. Appreciative joy is the understanding that someone else's happiness doesn't threaten our happiness. It actually enhances

our own happiness.

Near enemy is exuberance.

Far enemy is envy.

- **Equanimity (*upekkha*):** balanced, spacious opening to all aspects of life. Meeting each experience with nonattachment, non-discrimination with strength & softness. Equanimity understands things as they are. It's knowing that no matter how hard we want somebody to be free of suffering, we're actually not in control of the unfolding of the universe. This understanding shouldn't make us pull away, but rather, can give us the strength to sustain our caring, because it's not all tied up with our own agenda and our own sense of demand

Near enemy is indifference.

Far enemy is reactivity, Impulsiveness

Notice in sitting practice and daily life when:

- Any of the above intentions, attitudes, states of heart or mind are present in your body, heart, mind. Even for a moment.
- Any of the above they are not present even for a moment.
- Any the near and far "enemies" are present.
- Please be gentle with this exercise.