

A Practice for Developing Kindness Toward Yourself

BY VALERIE MASON-JOHN | NOVEMBER 13, 2019



Valerie Mason-John, author of *Detox Your Heart: Meditations for Emotional Healing*, shares a meditation for cultivating a positive relationship with yourself, and, by extension, the world.



Photo by Anh Phan.

When we take positive action and respond creatively to our anger, we are taking good care of ourselves. Taking care of our hearts, minds, and bodies is taking positive action. Learning to be kind and loving toward ourselves is a challenge. It is also part of the lifelong practice of working with our anger.

There is a meditation called the *metta bhavana*, which has its origins in the Buddhist tradition. *Metta* means loving-kindness, and *bhavana* means to develop. This meditation teaches us to be kind and gentle by cultivating a positive relationship with ourselves and the rest of the world. Loving-kindness can be the beginning of compassion for ourselves and the way to end anger in our hearts and minds. It is what I have used to begin releasing the toxins of anger, hatred, and fear from my heart. It has been the alchemy in my life.

The first stage of this meditation turned my life around. It was here that I faced the question, “If I can’t feel love for myself, how can I feel healthy love for others?”

Below are instructions for this first stage of the meditation. I hope you find it as revolutionary, over time, as I did.

Developing Kindness toward Yourself — A Metta Practice

- Close your eyes, grounding yourself on your seat. Make sure you are fully supported and your feet are placed firmly on the ground.
- Become aware of the breath permeating your body. Imagine it to be a spray clearing the toxins from your heart.
- After a minute try to visualize looking back at yourself, or see yourself in a beautiful place that you enjoy. Or just silently call your name. Remember to breathe.
- After another minute say to yourself, “May I be happy,” then breathe and acknowledge how this feels. Then say, “May I be well,” then breathe and acknowledge how this feels. Then say, “May I be kind toward my suffering,” then breathe.
- Allow yourself to sit in stillness with whatever arises. After a few minutes say, “May I cultivate more kindness within my heart. May I cultivate more peace within my heart. May I continue to develop and grow.”
- Continue to recite these phrases, leaving a minute or two between each, staying connected with yourself all the time.
- After ten minutes bring the practice to an end.

If you practice this weekly it will begin to transform your heart. If you do it daily it will bring about positive change in your life.

If our hearts are full of love and kindness for ourselves, there is little room for anger. Such mental states might arise, but love is the cleansing water that puts out the flames of anger.

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ABOUT VALERIE MASON-JOHN

Valerie (Vimalasara) Mason-John is a senior teacher in the Triratna Order and author of *Detox Your Heart: Meditations for Emotional Trauma*. Her next book, *I'm Still Your Negro: An Homage to James Baldwin*, will be published this spring.

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