

Intention Setting for MF3.04: The Power of Unconditional Self-Compassion

I choose to thrive (1)

If it serves you, address the Higher Power of your understanding.

Write and read your personalized self-compassion mantra here, or read the one that follows:

May the forces of Truth, Light, and Love guide me away from the darkness and into the light.

** Mindful pause **

I choose to live with a compassionate heart (3)

I could engage in self-judgment, but I choose to treat myself with unconditional self-compassion so I may be more (loving, wise, brave, and resilient).

Whenever I experience the falsehood alarms of suffering, I will kindly remember my self-compassion mantra and soothe myself with gentle touch and/or movement.



(Dear Sweetie - Suffering is being known. May I use this difficulty for my inner growth. All feeling beings suffer, and want to be treated with respect, including me. I love and accept myself exactly as I am. May I relate to myself, all parts of myself, and this situation, with mindfulness, love, wisdom, and care.)

** Mindful pause **

NOTE: The three Falsehood Alarms include: 1. MIND: Noticing when a false thought is actively believed in the mind. 2. BODY: Experiencing the mental or emotional unpleasantness that arises from believing the false thought. 3. BEHAVIOR: Noticing behavior impulses that encourage you to behave unskillfully, or noticing unskillful behavior.

NOTE: Suffering, as we define it, is the needless unpleasantness that arises when we resist the present moment or identify with any form - be that form a thought, sensation, the body, or external forms. Suffering may be obvious and intense or very subtle and faint.

I choose to meditate (1)

Out of love, I choose to meditate for 5 or more minutes a day to learn how meditation will benefit myself and all life.

** Mindful Pause **

I choose to be mindful of breath (1)

To live with more mindfulness, focus, peace, and joy, I choose to be mindful

of breath. Whenever I remember to, I will take a mindful pause or rest part of my awareness on the sensations of breath.

** Mindful pause **

I choose to cultivate wisdom (1)

To develop wisdom, discernment, and love, I will investigate judgmental thoughts. This will help me clearly see all of the ways that they are untrue, unkind, and unhelpful. I will then offer them a wise and loving response that helps me feel calm, grounded, and peaceful.

** Mindful pause **

I choose to live with a grateful heart (1)

Out of love for myself and all life, I choose to give thanks and celebrate all that is wonderful, helpful, good, skillful, successful, and beautiful in the world. May my heart overflow with the gratitude of sympathetic and appreciative joy.

** Mindful Pause **

You're done! Give thanks, do your celebratory move, and log that you completed this activity. Way to go!



Mindfulness Mission Planning

Get out your planner and fill in the blanks on when you will do your mindfulness mission this week.

Example: On Wednesday, I will do my mindfulness mission after the evening dog walk, in my bedroom.

On (day of week) _____ I will do my mindfulness mission (time – preferably before or after a routine activity) _____
(location) _____.

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(location) _____.

Please put these activities in your planner, and then follow through. Do your celebratory move for finishing this assignment. Way to go, friend!

Compassion Phrases

Start by using the guided meditations with the phrases to become familiar with the phrases we use to help incline our minds and hearts towards compassion.

However, when doing love-based meditations, it is helpful to repeat the phrases from memory. So when you feel comfortable doing so, start using one of the guided meditations without phrases.

Use this handout to review the phrases before the meditation and to reference if ever you can't remember them during the meditation.

Finally, to help you practice and memorize your self-compassion mantra, you may practice saying it, instead of these phrases, during the section where you offer yourself self-compassion. Best wishes and enjoy!

Phrases for Your Benefactor (and Individual Beings)

I care about your suffering; I care enough to be close.

May you use this suffering for your inner growth.

May you love and accept yourself exactly as you are.

May you be free from suffering and the root causes of suffering.

May love and wisdom protect and guide you.

Phrases for Self

I care about my suffering; I care enough to be close.

May I use this suffering for my inner growth.

May I love and accept myself exactly as I am.

May I be free from suffering and the root causes of suffering.

May love and wisdom protect and guide me.

Phrases for All Life

I care about our suffering; I care enough to be close.

May you use our suffering for our inner growth.

May we love and accept ourselves exactly as we are.

May we be free from suffering and the root causes of suffering.

May love and wisdom protect and guide us.



Imagine the Innocent Infant Within

One of the practices civil rights activists trained with so they could respond to acts of hate and violence with love and compassion can be called: Imagine the Innocent Infant Within. There is much we can learn from this practice to help us drop our judgment and forgive those who have harmed us.

It works like this: Imagine the person who you have difficulties with as they were when they were an innocent, newborn baby. Then feel your heart space and investigate this image by asking yourself:

- Is this baby sacred?
- Does this baby have inherent worth and value?
- Is this baby loved unconditionally by Life?
- Does this baby have hatred, prejudice or judgment?

Use these and/or similar questions to help remind you of the liberating insight that all life is sacred. They were and are beloved children of Life. If they exist, then like us, they too are loved unconditionally by Life.

It also reminds us that all people, no matter how unskillfully they behave, were once innocent newborn babies. No one is born hating, despising, and wanting to harm or kill others.

Then use your imagination to investigate the following questions. Do your best to feel the answer in your heart space too.

- What abuse, fear, and terror might this baby have experienced growing up to become so distorted and confused?
- Did their parents or guardians physically or verbally abuse them, or physically or emotionally neglect them to make them think such unskillful behavior is skillful?
- Did they learn how to bully others, from the bullying they received from their parents, siblings, or peers?
- What falsehoods (aversion/hatred, craving/greed, arrogance/self-view, etc.) are they under the spell of and what

suffering do those falsehoods make them feel?

- How few examples of love could they have had in their life if they behave this unskillfully?

Use these and similar questions to remind us of the bad fortune in their life that conditioned them with falsehoods and the resulting unskillfulness.

This reminds us that, like us, they are victims of their impersonal conditioning, which happened to them through no fault of their own.

Unfortunately, they had a lot of bad fortune which has harmed and warped them and caused them to harm others. This investigation reminds us that, "If not for my good fortune, I would be them."

Seeing their suffering, we are reminded of their need for love and compassion. During this course, we have seen directly how our own thoughts and emotions are conditioned and impersonal. This helps us treat ourselves with compassion and kindness despite our unskillfulness. It's not much of a leap to recognize that others run their impersonal conditioning as well. Like us, they also believe their conditioned and impersonal thoughts. Just as we have compassion for our unskillfulness, we must have compassion for their unskillfulness.

Remember, Mindfulness is Conditioned Too

Mindfulness helps us transcend our conditioning. With mindfulness, we disidentify from our conditioned thoughts and emotions, and infuse them with love and skillfulness. Yet before we start judgmentally accusing others of not being mindful or doing their spiritual work, reflect on how coming to mindfulness, being interested in it, and having the time and luxury to practice it is due to good fortune, or what some call grace.

The upshot is, we can't take credit for our practice. Our practice is due to entirely to impersonal good fortune. Only the delusion of self-view would take ownership of our practice, rather than give thanks for the gift of it. In the same way, we don't want to judge others for not



doing the practice that they have not been graced enough by their conditioning to come to. The best we can do is offer them good fortune through our loving, kind, and compassionate attitudes and behaviors towards them.

Prioritize Spiritual Over Material

When trying to forgive others, it helps to remember they did the best they could with what they were given. Although culturally, we favor those with worldly knowledge, material wealth, and physical beauty, love and wisdom actually favors those with spiritual knowledge, spiritual wealth, and spiritual beauty. It can help us forgive the rich and famous to remember that those who master the former to the neglect of the latter deserve our compassion.

A common judgment is to assume that wealthy people have access to more education and opportunities, and therefore, their faults are even more egregious. Yet we must remember that educational opportunities born of material wealth, often lead to acquiring worldly knowledge, and valuing material knowledge over spiritual knowledge. Worldly knowledge, just like worldly riches, does not help a person become free of their suffering. In fact, worldly knowledge provides a false view of where happiness lies: in accumulating things, wealth, power, fame, and control over others.

Furthermore, for some, wealth can insulate them from the problems of the world that exist to help spiritually mature. So, wealth is not always an advantage, but often a disadvantage when it comes to spiritual growth and becoming free of suffering. Once our basic material needs are met, more material wealth burdens and distracts us from the importance of spiritual riches. Being mindful of the drawbacks of material wealth and worldly wisdom may help you address any judgments held towards wealthy and powerful people.

Now, maybe this person did have access to spiritual teachings growing up. However, we must remember that not all places of worship teach pure spirituality. Too often, the teachings have been corrupted with falsehood. Many places of worship actively teach judgment, and encourage people to see life forms in the divided terms of: good versus evil, superior and inferior, worthy and unworthy. Imagine the tragedy of being conditioned like that from your place of worship -- what bad fortune indeed!

Another common falsehood of our culture is valuing outer beauty over inner beauty. We often feel judgment towards people, beings, and life forms who do not meet our conditioned and impersonal standards of beauty. However, from a spiritual perspective, we don't want to identify with these standards. From Life's perspective, all life forms are beautiful, worthy, and sacred. If your judgment arises based on looks and aesthetics, see that for the falsehood it is.

Possible investigative questions to remind you of these above priorities include:

- Are they rich in worldly knowledge or spiritual knowledge?
- Are they rich in material wealth or spiritual wealth?
- Growing up, might their parents or guardians have brought them to a corrupted place of worship that actively taught judgment (hatred) and seeing life in divided terms of good vs evil, superior and inferior, worthy and unworthy? Compassionately reflect: the place whose purpose is to help uproot falsehoods, actively instills them – can you feel the tragedy of this and offer them compassion?
- Does Life find them beautiful? Can I see and honor their inner beauty?

As you investigate your judgments towards others, be mindful of what priorities are at play (spiritual vs. material), and remember that spiritual wealth, wisdom, and beauty takes precedence, while those who lack these deserve our compassion.



Using the Four Elements to Investigate Sensations

In India, some wisdom traditions believed that all forms – including our bodies – are made from the four elements: earth, air, fire, and water.

These four elements constantly move, which is why all forms are impermanent and change. Each element has its own qualities and sensations, and as the elements change and recombine, they create the sensations that we feel. Meditators from these traditions would label their sensations by which element could be most strongly felt.

Regardless of this theory's scientific accuracy, four-element meditations skillfully help us:

- Relate mindfully to sensations with curiosity, courage, and compassion.
- Relate to our sensations with equanimity, free from craving or aversion.
- Relate to our sensations without identifying with them or the body.
- Relate to our sensations with fewer stories and falsehoods.

To start, try to memorize each element, its primary quality (in parenthesis), and the sensations related to that element. Until then, do the four elements meditations and keep the four elements reference guide handy.

Earth (solidity): hardness (feet on the ground, seat in a chair), softness (fuzzy blanket), stiffness, heaviness, or dullness.

Air (movement): extending, flexing, expanding, contracting, or pressure (like wind on the skin or bloating in the intestines).

Fire (temperature and energy): warmth, coolness, lightness (buoyancy, uplifting, rising), vibrations, or tingling.

Water (fluidity): fluidity, flow (sensations that you feel move, travel, or radiate), moisture, or pulsing (like the feel of blood in the arteries).

Investigate all sensations by translating them into the four elements. To do this, use your direct experience to answer these questions:

1. What is the primary element of this sensation?
2. What other elements can be felt in this sensation? Use only the descriptive words that follow each element above.
3. Do these elements harm, change, or affect my formless awareness (my true self)?

By seeing sensations in their elemental parts, we help remove their story. Unpleasant sensations like anger, grief, pain, hunger, lust, or tiredness are all just a temporary recombination of earth, water, fire, and air elements. They are nothing to fear or be aversive to, and nothing to crave or cling to. And they are certainly nothing to identify with.

Try it out, and see for yourself.

