A BLESSING PRACTICE

Adapted from *Jewish Meditation Practices for Everyday Life* by Rabbi Jeff Roth (pp163-183)

INTRODUCTION

The blessing practice consists of a series of phrases that are repeated over and over, silently, in the mind. (Some of you may notice a similarity to the Buddhist “metta,” Loving-kindness meditation.)

The phrases are:

* May I be blessed with peace.
* May I be blessed with joy.
* May I be blessed with loving-kindness.
* May I be blessed with compassion

The blessing practice asks you to cultivate the four qualities: peace, joy, loving-kindness and compassion. Before we begin working with the phrases, we’ll do a brief guided meditation on each of the qualities, to discover the emotions and bodily sensations they evoke in us. You already know these qualities, you have already experienced them, therefore the body remembers.

THE FOUR QUALITIES

Close your eyes. Sit comfortably.

Peace

The term shalom carries with it the meaning of completeness. Peace can be a state of acceptance, not wanting, calmness, serenity, fulfillment, satisfaction, or equanimity.

Recall a time or situation in your life when you felt very peaceful. Focus on the scene. Some of these moments may call forth joyful or loving feelings as well. If you can, try to distinguish peace from these other wonderful feelings

Pay attention to what sensations arise in your body.

If you can bring to your body that feeling of peacefulness, see how long you can hold its presence.

Joy

See if you can experience joy with your eyes closed. Recall scenes from your life when you were joyful, with a simple sense of happiness. If this doesn’t happen easily, try deliberately putting a half-smile on your face. Pay attention to the way joy manifests as a felt physical sense.

Loving-kindness

Loving-kindness is the quality of feeling held in a loving embrace. Acting kindly and with unbounded love is a feeling that comes not from ego or wanting anything in return.

Imagine times in your life when you felt that kind of unconditional love flowing outward. See if you can experience that quality as a bodily sensation, either as the giver or recipient of loving-kindness.

Compassion

Compassion is a very heart-centred, balanced feeling, the quivering of the heart in response to seeing suffering. Compassion has a spirit of generosity behind it. Remember a time someone you know was suffering, and you can feel for them in a spirit of wanting to be helpful. Try to experience the feeling as it manifests in bodily sensations.

THE BLESSING PRACTICE

Now we’re ready to being the Blessing Practice itself.

As I repeat the four phrases:

* May I be blessed with peace.
* May I be blessed with joy.
* May I be blessed with loving-kindness.
* May I be blessed with compassion

link the phrases with your breath.

On the in-breath, say the words, "May I be blessed with …" On the out-breath, say the quality you wish to cultivate: peace, joy, loving-kindness, compassion. Say each phrase one time and then begin again with the first phrase and continue on through the other three phrases.

As you work to coordinate the phrases with the breath, it will be helpful to intentionally slow down your breathing. It is helpful to have a slight amount of additional time to see if a feeling is cultivated in the body and t be. able to experience it in the body. Since an open heart is generally a calm heart, this slowing down is usually helpful in and of itself. When your attention wanders away from the phrases, gently bring yourself back to focusing on them.

We will direct these blessings three ways:

* first, to ourselves (“May I be blessed…”)
* second to those around us (“May you be blessed…)
* third, to us all (“May we be blessed…)