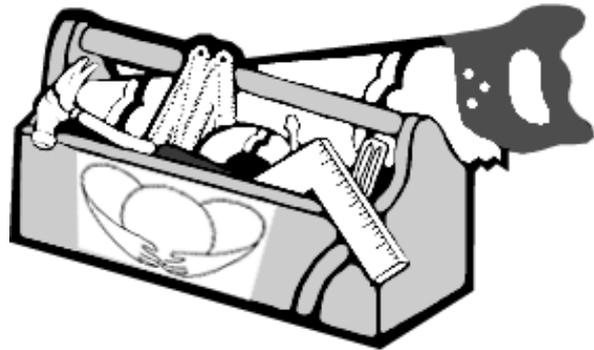


# A Lovingkindness Toolbox

BY TARCHIN HEARN



As we've seen through many of the preceding essays, lovingkindness is not a technique or a method. It is really a quality of being; an attitude brought to every moment of life; an embodiment of friendly, easeful awakeness; life functioning; open, joyful and well. To talk about it or to try to develop it is to often completely miss the point. On one hand it is so natural there really is nothing to practice. In a sense true love, the unconditionally responsive openness and supportiveness of being, is the very nature of the universe unfolding. On the other hand we live in a world that is so disconnected, so driven by hopes and fears about achievement and performance, that this naturalness can seem to be quite strange, untrustworthy and even unnatural. In trying to develop lovingkindness, the effort of 'trying' can obscure the very thing we are wanting to bring forth.

In this last section we offer a number of different approaches that could, in a sense, make up a basic 'lovingkindness toolbox'. Hopefully, with some experimenting, you will find a few methods that work well for you and can provide a solid foundation for a lifetime of deepening this profound yet always available mystery. Like any toolbox, it's not necessary to use all the tools all the time. A skilled trades person will first evaluate the job at hand and then use what is most suitable for doing the job. There's no point in trying to cut a piece of wood with a screwdriver,

whereas a hammer is just the thing for banging in a nail. With practice, you will develop some skill in this work. Then you may find yourself inspired to invent tools of your own that are not included in this general 'startup kit'.

Much more important than any powerful or sophisticated tools or techniques is to have a clear understanding or appreciation of the task needing to be done. When you realise the profundity and necessity of lovingkindness you will inevitably find ways to bring it forth without anyone telling you about techniques. You just stop the blocking, the clinging, the controlling and allow each moment to flower. If you are still struggling in the critical mode of trying to correct the world, your lovingkindness practice will inevitably become another unconscious attempt to control or escape from things that are challenging or difficult. If this happens, one's practice only serves to deepen the mess.

Traditionally, lovingkindness practice begins with oneself. Once there is a warm, open, easeful, awake, forgiving, accepting, appreciating, awareness, present throughout your entire being, then the work moves to extending this quality out to others. Today, many people find bringing lovingkindness to themselves to be the most difficult of tasks. Though often able to feel forgiveness, acceptance and tolerance for others, they still get bogged down in a mess of intolerance and impatience with themselves. If

you find yourself in this type of situation, it is sometimes more functional to begin with lovingkindness for others and then, having contacted a warm glow, to extend it to yourself. Whatever you do, approach the work with flexibility. Try it one way and then another. What supports a flowering today, might not work tomorrow. A flexible mind is already well on the way to a flowering heart.

I suggest you begin by reading through all the methods as some of the things that are said in one section can be creatively applied to others. You may even find yourself combining some

of the techniques. Once you have gone through the 'menu', then select the one that seems most interesting at this time and give it a go. The exercises are not in any particular order. Some are very simple and others more involved. To really give them a chance to speak to you, try working with one for fifteen minutes or more, each day for a week before trying another.

*May these practices water the seeds of wholesome unfolding and may these seeds grow and flower for the benefit of all beings.*



# Charity begins at home

## • Earth Support

Stand with your knees slightly flexed and your arms hanging easefully by your side. Be aware of your breathing. Beginning with your head, slowly bring your awareness down through your body feeling all the sensations and inviting each area to soften and relax. When you get to your feet, feel the weight of your whole body standing on the earth. Each time you exhale, sink a little into your knees.

Notice the points of contact between your feet and the floor or the ground. (It is good if you can do this without shoes.) Imagine that roots are growing from these points of contact, extending deep down into the earth. Your whole body is like a tree, well rooted and gently swaying in the wind. As you breathe in, mentally think,

“Breathing in, the earth supports me”. And as you breathe out, mentally think, “Breathing out, sharing deeply”.

“Breathing in, the earth supports me. Breathing out sharing deeply.” As you breathe like this, allow your whole being to open and soften.

## • Simple breathing

Many times during the day, pause for a moment and stop what you are doing. Give all of your attention to the physical sensations of breathing. Don't attempt to control the breath in any way. Simply feel the entire inhalation followed by the entire exhalation. Begin to make friends with the breath and the sensations arising in your body. If you discover any places of

tension or holding, bring a gentle awareness to the area and while still appreciating the breathing, invite the area to soften. Using the breath as a centre, scan through your whole body, softening and releasing.

## • “I’m here for you”

Sit comfortably and feel your body resting in its chair. Feel the movements of your breathing. A living body is a breathing body. Feel the alternating sensations of warm and cool at your nostrils or lips. Soften into the movements of your chest and abdomen. If you can become very still, you may have a sense of the rhythms of breathing moving throughout your entire body. Become very intimate with this; touching this alive body with kindness and interest.

Take care not to slide into a pattern of “watching your breath”; standing to one side, observing and analysing. Instead, actually feel your body breathing; a tactile reality. Meditation is intimate and personal. On the inhalation, allow your whole being to quieten, as if you were listening with every cell; listening to the silent symphony of now. Within this rich texture of stillness, imagine that the entire of your being is saying your name. “Tarchin.....” Then on the exhalation, hear it whispering, “I’m here for you”. “Tarchin.....I’m here for you.” “(Your own name)..... I’m here for you.” Breathe like this for a while.

If any difficulties arise, you might name them. “Critique.....I’m here for you.” “Worry.....I’m here for you.” “Impatience.....I’m here for you.” “Exhilaration.....I’m here for you.” “Sound of the traffic ..... I’m here for you.” No more running. No more fighting. No more escaping. “Present moment.....I’m here for you. Allow generosity to flower and give your undivided attention to this present mystery of breathing.

## • *Gattas* or memory verses

To enhance the process of breathing, you could add one of the following three exercises. Sometimes by simply remembering a key word or phrase we can rediscover this place we so value. Merge the words with your breath so that the awareness of breathing and the meaning of the words become one flowing movement.

### *Ah-ing*

Become aware of your breathing and on the exhalation, mentally think the sound Ahhhh. You don’t have to say it out loud. Simply feel the sound reverberating through your body. A great sigh of satisfaction. A great sigh of letting go. A great sigh of letting be. After a while you may feel a warm tingling glow spreading through your being.

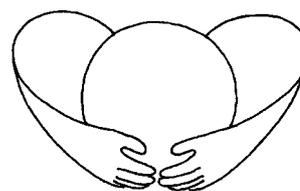
### *Creating your own mantra*

This is the same as the Ahhing exercise except you could try using a simple word that speaks deeply to you, something like, love or peace, or mercy or some other word that evokes a feeling of release and letting go.

### *I have arrived. I am home.*

This gatta or memory verse was proposed by the Vietnamese Zen Master, Thich Nhat Hanh.

Becoming aware of the breathing, scanning through the body and releasing tensions, on the inhalation think, “I have arrived.” On the exhalation think, “I am home.”



# Embracing all Beings

## • Through individuals

Resting easefully with an awareness of your breathing, bring a quality of lovingkindness to yourself. Use any of the preceding methods that work for you. A sign of success will be a warm, friendly, joyful glow suffusing your body and mind. Once this is established, either send this warm friendliness to your teacher or invite your teacher to dwell in the midst of this glow. Then in a similar way, extend it to your parents, then to immediate relatives, then to distant relatives, then to friends, to strangers and finally to beings you have difficulties with.

With each of these people, hold them in your mind's eye until you feel a quality of friendly openness throughout your being, then, wish them well, and move on to the next person. The main sign of success in the development of *metta* is that you can maintain an evenness of lovingkindness in the presence of all of these different beings; the same quality of love for strangers or enemies as for ones who are very close.

## • Through categories

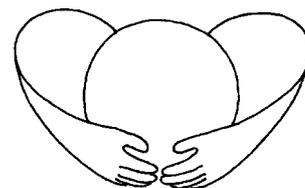
Again with awareness of breathing, establish a feeling of lovingkindness throughout your being. Then extend the feeling to all humans. You could do this all at once or you could divide them up into categories. May all

people in Australasia be well and happy. May all people in Africa be well and happy. And so forth. Another approach might be; may all people in hospitals be well and happy. May all people in prisons be well and happy. May all mothers in childbirth be well and happy. You can see there is limitless scope here.

After spending time with humans then move to animals, plants, fungi and micro organisms. There are many books that can help you with these categories for example: *The Larousse Book of Animal Life*, or *Five Kingdoms* by Lynn Margulis. As a discipline, I once worked my way through these two books, reading each section and then extending metta to the beings thus described. It really opened my appreciation of the diversity of life forms on Earth.-

After going through all the categories of life, then hold the entire planet, one great dynamic living system, *Gaia*. From here, send lovingkindness out to other planets and the beings that are manifesting them.

Finish off by holding the vision of all of these beings as one vast interdependently unfolding ecology. May all beings be well and happy.



## • Through direction

Imagine in your heart a beautiful many-petalled rose-coloured flower. Alternatively, you could imagine a soft ruby glow, a sphere of light. The rose light radiates in all directions filling your body and being with lovingkindness.

Join the experience of this light, this lightness of being, with the sensations of your breathing. Then allow the radiance to expand further. Think that whoever or whatever finds itself within this sphere of light is being bathed in the light of lovingkindness. This sphere of open friendliness expands in all directions, front, back, right, left, up and down, until it embraces the entire planet. From there you can allow it to move into space holding the solar system, the galaxy and so forth.

To strengthen this visualisation, try holding a real flower in your hands as you meditate, or sit in the presence of an actual ruby coloured light source. Alternatively you could paint flower mandalas or create mandalas from flower petals. Any of these activities will help to make your visualisation more tangible and alive. The light might eventually become flush golden-peach in colour or even go towards rainbow.

## • Physical Massage

Although this could be done at any time, it is a very good practice to do before going to bed at night. Have a hot bath or a sauna then take some massage oil and slowly and methodically massage your own body. Take time with

each part. As you do, become aware of your breathing and let it harmonise with the movements of your hands. Massage slowly but thoroughly and on each exhalation, think “foot, (or whatever part of the body you are working on) may you be well and happy.” Work your way through the whole body allowing your hands to express love and caring and support.

Finish by lying on your back with your hands by your sides. Hold an awareness of breathing and gently centre in your heart as you go to sleep. Alternately you could allow a sphere of well being to radiate from your heart embracing all beings. May all beings be well and happy.

## • Eating with love

Before you begin to eat, pause for a few moments and be aware of your breathing. Scan through your body and let everything relax. Look at the food you are about to eat and mentally say, “May this food have been prepared in a state of love and may I receive it in a state of love.”

Another method which is good, if you are together with friends who value this kind of work, is to surround the table and to link hands in a circle. Be aware of your breathing and at the same time, open all your senses. Seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, tasting and thinking of the food, your companions and the circumstances bringing you all together. Consider some of the factors that are supporting this moment. Vegetable gardens, rain, farmers, sun, parents, plate makers and so forth. Open your appreciation to the vast symbiosis of being arising as this unique moment. See the food and your friends. Feel your breathing. You might finish with a short prayer. Then enjoy your meal.

## • Walking with love

Can you walk so that moment by moment you are completely present, not leaning into the future or escaping into the past? Here are four reminders that together can transform your coming and going into a wonderful meditation.

### 1 - *Smiling*

Allow a smile to illumine your being.

### 2 - *Breathing*

Become aware of your breathing, just as it is, without trying to control it.

### 3 - *Walking*

Become aware of the physical sensations of your body moving. Feel your feet touching the earth. The way your arms swing, your head and torso. Allow your breathing to harmonise with the rate of walking.

### 4 - *Moving through a living being*

As you walk realise that you are stepping upon innumerable living beings; grass, micro organisms and so forth. Even the air is full of life. Life moving through life.

Every once in a while stop and check through these four points. Don't worry if you can't get them all together. You'll likely find you can combine two or three and from time to time you'll get all four. Try walking for the sheer pleasure of walking.

There is a story that when the Buddha was born, he took 17 steps and a flower sprang up from each footstep. You might try this. As you walk, imagine that you are blessing the earth and that through your feet, the earth is blessing you. With each step imagine a flower springs up from the earth.

## • Working with difficulties

Here is a meditation that can often bring more space and light into difficult relationships.

### 1 - *Posture*

Sit in a posture that supports a sense of relaxation and alertness.

### 2 - *Breathing & Scanning*

Become aware of your breathing and scan through your body allowing any tight spots to soften.

### 3 - *Aspiration*

Bring to mind your aspiration for deepening love and understanding.

### 4 - *Seeing Others*

Imagine in your mind's eye the person with whom you are having difficulties.

See that person just as you usually do. Then, as if you were pressing the fast rewind button on a video, run their life backwards until you see them around the age of three. Basically you take them back to an age where you can see them as innocent. In your imagination, watch them growing towards today. Certain types of foods are flowing in, emotional experiences, interactions with parents, hopes, fears, dreams, illnesses, accidents.

All these factors are weaving together a fabric of body-mind called this person. As they get older, they are shaped by experiences at school, by books and films and media, by social pressures, religious and political views. All of these together are shaping the being you know today.

Allow the video to accelerate showing you a growing 'interbeing' of uncountable circumstances and situations. Eventually you get them up to now and you observe them as a dynamic of all these factors. Then you let go of them and come back to the breathing and to simply sitting where you are.

### 5 - Seeing Self

Now imagine yourself in front and do the same thing you did in step four.

Take yourself back to the age of two or three and then watch yourself grow as a constantly changing, miraculously unfolding mystery of interbeing.

Appreciate how you are really an arising of uncountable factors; food, education, genetics, parents, social realities, economic fluctuations and so forth. In your mind's eye, watch yourself grow to this present moment, then, when you get up to who you are and how you are today, let go of the exercise and come back to simply breathing and sitting.

### 6 - Seeing Self & Others

Finally imagine yourself and the person you are having difficulties with are standing in front of you in a typical interaction.

See the interbeing them interacting with the interbeing you. Where is the basis of blame?

Although this meditation will not necessarily solve any problems, it will often give such a new perspective to the situation that a degree of tolerance, or understanding will emerge that wasn't there before. At this point forgiveness may become a real possibility.



## • Spontaneous presence

Sit in a posture that is easeful and alert. Settle into awareness of breathing and apart from that make no effort whatsoever to control or direct your attention. Allow the senses to operate freely and wherever your attention goes, look deeply into that thing or phenomena and mentally say, "May you be well and happy". It doesn't matter whether you are focusing on a tree, or on a sound or on a feeling or emotion, just stay with the awareness and wherever it alights, wish that thing well.

Working in this way you will often find the heart mind opening until rather than focusing on individual things that are arising in consciousness, you are appreciating the entire richness of present moment. "Present moment, may you be well and happy."

## • A Flowering Jewel

Sit comfortably and make friends with your breathing. Imagine in your heart a beautiful jewel-like flower radiating light in all directions. On each inhalation, sink deeply into the vision and on each exhalation sound the mantra *Om Mani Padme Hum*.

The word *mani* means jewel and the word *padme*, usually pronounced pay-may means flower or flowering.

Let your whole being rest in the sound and feeling of the mantra. If you are less focussed it

will help to murmur the mantra audibly but as you become more focussed, the volume will naturally die away as you sense the sound in the silence.

Discover the flowering jewel that you are and then move to seeing the flowering jewel that is everyone else.

## • Looking with greatly merciful eyes

In the Mahayana tradition of Buddhism there is a great Bodhisattva named *Avalokitesvaro* in Sanskrit and *Chenrezi* in Tibetan. *Chenrezi* is thought to be the manifestation of wisdom–compassion. His Holiness the Dalai Lama is considered by the Tibetan people to be an embodiment of *Chenrezi*.

In the actual practice and meditation of *Chenrezi*, there is a prayer and in this prayer there is the line, “Looking with greatly merciful eyes on all that lives.” Try taking this line to heart. Can you look with greatly merciful eyes on all who live, not only those who live outside of you such as plants and animals and other people but also those who live within you, such as your feelings, thoughts and memories.

You can extend this to all the senses. Listening with greatly merciful ears. Touching with greatly merciful hands or skin. Smelling with greatly merciful nose. Tasting with greatly merciful tongue. Thinking with greatly merciful mind.

Take this into every moment of the day. This is *Chenrezi* in action.

## • Tonglen

In the Tibetan tradition there is a wonderful meditation called the practice of receiving and sending. In Tibetan it is called *tonglen*. This method grapples very directly with the work of compassion and the flowering of lovingkindness.

*Tonglen* is taught in many ways. In this booklet we’ll take a very simple approach that you could adapt and apply to many situations.

Begin by sitting in a posture that is easeful and alert. Become aware of your breathing and relax into the sensations currently arising in your body. As you inhale, imagine all illness and suffering is drawn through your nostrils, into the mandala in your heart where it is transformed in the light of clear seeing and deep understanding. As you exhale, the clear light of compassion goes back out nurturing and supporting all beings. Breathe like this for a while.

In this meditation, you can invite the difficulties of someone you know or you can invite the suffering of whole categories of beings. The entire meditation rests on putting the well being of others ahead of one’s own well being; receiving the difficulties of others and sending them your strengths.

The practice can be combined with the mantra of *Chenrezi*, *Om Mani Padme Hum* and the visualisation given in the exercise, “The Flowering Jewel”. Begin visualising the jeweled flower in your heart and blend this with the mantra. Once you have established a sense of well being, then, on the inhalation invite in the suffering of beings and on the exhalation, with the mantra, send out lovingkindness and support.

# Classical Inspiration

## • The Four Divine Abidings

(From *Daily Puja* published by Wangapeka Books)

*May I be friendly, calm and free from ill-will  
and may I live in happiness. As I am, so, may  
all beings be friendly, calm and free from ill-will and  
may they live in happiness.*

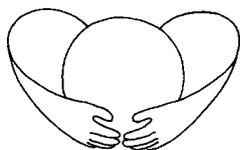
Ahaṃ avero homi, abyāpajho homi, anigho  
homi, sukhi attānaṃ pariharāmi.

Ahaṃ viya sabbe sattā averā hontu,  
abyāpajjhā hontu, anighā hontu, sukhi attānaṃ  
pariharantu.

Now I become aware of my breathing. As I  
breathe, I imagine in my heart, a jewelled flower  
or a soft globe of light, radiating lovingkindness,  
compassion, sympathetic-joy and equanimity to  
every part of my body.

(Breathe with this for a few minutes.)

As feelings of easefulness, spaciousness and  
clarity flower in my experience, I send the light  
of these four divine abidings in all directions,  
touching beings throughout the universe, sup-  
porting their health and unfolding.



## • The Bodhisattva Vow

*Bodhi* means awakening and *sattva* means  
being. Bodhisattva means awakening being.  
In it's most general sense, everyone is  
bodhisattva as everyone is a manifestation of life  
awakening. In the Mahayana schools of  
Buddhism the word bodhisattva refers  
particularly to someone who is dedicating their  
life to the welfare of all beings.

This great aspiration has been taken as a path  
in itself by millions of beings all over the world.  
It is sometimes expressed as the Bodhisattva  
Vow. These four vows have appeared in differ-  
ent expressions throughout the centuries but the  
essential intent has always remained the same.

Try reciting this first thing each morning and  
then try to manifest it throughout the day.

*However innumerable beings are,  
I vow to meet them with kindness and interest.  
However inexhaustible the states of suffering are,  
I vow to touch them with patience and love.  
However immeasurable the Dharmas are,  
I vow to explore them deeply.  
However incomparable the mystery of interbeing,  
I vow to surrender to it freely.*

*From this day forth, with Wisdom and  
Compassion as my Lamp and Staff,  
I dedicate all my life energies to the welfare  
of all beings.*

## • Prayer of Saint Francis of Assisi

This prayer by St Francis is loved by people all over the world. Try reading it with the breath, by pausing at the end of each line to mindfully breathe in and breathe out. Allow the meaning behind the words to shape your experience.

*Lord, make me an instrument of thy peace.*

*Where there is hatred, let me sow love.*

*Where there is injury, let me sow pardon.*

*Where there is doubt, let me sow faith.*

*Where there is despair, let me sow hope.*

*Where there is darkness, let me sow light*

*Where there is sadness, let me sow joy.*

*Oh, Great Spirit, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console.*

*Seek to be understood as to understand.*

*Seek to be loved as to love.*

*For it is in giving that we receive.*

*It is in pardoning that we are pardoned.*

*And it is in dying that we are born again to everlasting life.*



## • Lovingkindness Sutra

This ancient teaching on lovingkindness has been practised virtually unchanged since the time of the Buddha. It is still used by many Buddhists today as the basis for their loving kindness practice. This version has been taken from “The Mirror of the Dhamma” published by the Buddhist Publication Society, Sri Lanka. The translation was done by the Venerable Narada Mahathera. The sutra is often chanted as a daily practice. Try reading through each verse and then pause to reflect and bring the experience into your life.

### Karaṇiya Metta Sutta

(Pali version)

Karaṇiyam atthakusalena – yaṃ taṃ santam padaṃ abhisamecca

Sakko ujū ca sūjū ca – suvaco c’assa mudu anatimāni

*He who is skilled in goodness and who wishes to attain that state of calm should act thus:*

*He should be able, upright, perfectly upright, obedient, gentle and humble.*

Santussa ko ca subharo ca – appakicco ca sallahukavutti

Santindriyo ca nipako ca – appagabbho kulesu ananugiddho

*Contented, easily supportable, with few duties, of light livelihood, controlled in sensing, discreet, not impudent, not greedily attached to families.*

Na ca khuddaṃ samācare kiñci – yena viññū  
pare upavadeyyuṃ

Sukhino vā khemino hontu – sabbe sattā  
bhavantu sukhitattā

*He should not commit any slight wrong  
such that other wise men might censure  
him. May all beings be happy and  
secure; may their minds be wholesome!*

Ye keci paṇabhūtatthi – tasā vā thāvarā vā  
anavasesā

Diḡhā vā ye mahantā vā – majjhimā  
rassakāṇukathūlā

Diṭṭhā vā yeva adiṭṭhā – ye ca dūre vasanti  
avidūre

Bhūtā vā sambavesi vā – sabbe sattā bhavantu  
sukhitattā

*Whatever living beings there be:  
– feeble or strong, long, stout, or  
medium, short, small or large,  
seen or unseen, those dwelling far  
or near, those who are born and  
those who are to be born  
– may all beings, without exception,  
be happy-minded!*

Na paro paraṃ nikubbetha – nātimañña  
katthacinaṃ kaṃci

Byārosanā paṭighasañña – nāññamañña  
dukkham iccheyya

*Let not one deceive another  
not despise any person whatever  
in any place.  
In anger or illwill let him not wish  
any harm to another.*

Mātā yathā niyaṃ puttaṃ – āyusā ekaputtam  
anurakkhe

Evampi sabbabhūtesu – mānasaṃ bhāvaye  
aparimāṇaṃ

*Just as a mother would protect her only  
child even at the risk of her own life,  
even so let him cultivate a boundless  
heart towards all beings.*

Mettaṃ ca sabba-lokasmiṃ – mānasaṃ  
bhāvaye aparimāṇaṃ

Uddhaṃ adho ca tiriyaṅca – asambāhaṃ  
averaṃ asapattaṃ

*Let his thoughts of boundless love  
pervade the whole world:  
– above, below and across – without any  
obstruction,  
without any hatred, without any enmity.*

Tiṭṭhaṃ caraṃ nisinno vā – sayāno vā  
yāvat’assa vigatamiddho

Etaṃ satiṃ adhiṭṭheyya – brahmam etaṃ  
vihāraṃ idha māhu

*Whether he stands, walks, sits  
or lies down, as long as he is awake,  
he should develop his mindfulness.  
This, they say, is the Highest Conduct.*

Diṭṭhiṅca anupagamma silavā – dassanena  
sampanno

Kāmeso vineyya gedhaṃ – na hi jātu  
gabbhaseyyaṃ punar eti’ti.

*Not falling into error,  
virtuous and endowed with insight,  
he gives up attachment to sense desires.  
Of a truth he does not come again  
for conception in a womb.*

