



RECOVERY DHARMA

Appreciative Joy Meditation

Find a comfortable but alert position in which to sit. As you allow your eyes to gently close, pay attention to the body and see if there are any minor adjustments that will help you maintain the position for the duration of the meditation. Rest your hands comfortably on your legs or in your lap.

We'll start with a few minutes of concentration practice, just to help our minds settle and arrive in our present time experience. Allow your breathing to be natural, seeing where in the body you can feel the breath most clearly. It may be in the stomach or abdomen, where you can feel the rising and falling as the body breathes. It might be in the chest, where you may notice the expansion and contraction as the body inhales and exhales. Perhaps it's at the nostrils, where you can feel a slight tickle as the air comes in, and the subtle warmth as the body exhales.

Breathing in, just bring a gentle awareness to the breath. Breathing out, be aware of the breath leaving the body.

(Pause)

You may notice the mind wandering. This offers us an opportunity to cultivate mindfulness and concentration. Each time we notice the mind wandering, we're strengthening our ability to recognize our present experience. Each time we bring the mind back to the breath, we strengthen our ability to concentrate. Treat it as an opportunity rather than a problem.

(Pause)

In appreciative joy practice, we're cultivating a mind and heart that shows appreciation, joy, and gratitude for the good fortune we experience within ourselves and our environment. We come to understand that our happiness increases when we can appreciate the happiness in others.

We may begin our appreciative joy practice by repeating the following phrases for ourselves:

*May I be happy for the joy I have.
May my joy increase.
May I be grateful and content.*

(two to three minutes of silence)

Now bring to mind someone who has benefitted you or been especially kind to you. This may be a loved one, a friend, a teacher or mentor. As this person comes to mind, tune into your natural desire to see this person happy, free from suffering, and at ease with life.

The practice is to counteract any greed, ill will, jealousy or envy, and to recognize how our joy is connected to the joy of others.

Repeat silently to yourself the following phrases:

*Just as I am happy for the joy I have,
I am happy for the joy you have.
May your joy increase.
May you be grateful and content.*

(two to three minutes of silence)

Let this person go from your mind and bring to mind a neutral person. This is someone you see, maybe regularly, but don't know very well. It may be somebody who works somewhere you go a lot, a coworker, a person you've seen at meetings, or maybe a neighbor.

Although you don't know this person well, you can recognize that just as you wish to be happy, this person wants to be happy as well. You don't need to know what their happiness looks like. Again, offer this person the phrases of appreciative joy, recognizing that you aren't in charge of their happiness.

*I am happy for the joy you have.
May your joy increase.
May you be grateful and content.*

(two to three minutes of silence)

Now, letting this neutral person go, think of somebody whom you find difficult, or toward whom you feel a resentment, hurt, or jealousy. You may not want to pick the most difficult person in your life; instead, choose someone who is currently agitating or annoying you.

Again, offer these phrases of appreciative joy with the intention of recognizing that each individual is in charge of their own happiness and ease:

*I am happy for the joy you have.
May your joy increase.
May you be grateful and content.*

(two to three minutes of silence)

Now letting go of this difficult person, extend your joy to all beings.

I am happy for the joy of all beings.

May your joy increase.

May we all be grateful and content.

Now, letting go of all thoughts of others, return your focus to your own body, mind, and heart. Notice any discomfort, tension, or difficulty you may be feeling. Notice if you are experiencing any new lightness, warmth, relaxation, or joy. Notice if you feel any increase in your ability to appreciate the joy you and all beings have experienced. Then, whenever you are ready, allow your eyes to open and gently return your attention to the space around you.