

Community Love Meditation

This is a guided meditation to be read aloud to a group. It gives two options in the four sections. The leader or leaders read the guidance either for sitting or for walking.

Singing to Begin:

אהבה ורחמים חסד ושלום

Ahavah V'Rachamim, Hesed V'Shalom

Love and Compassion, Lovingkindness and Peace.

--Ahavah, by Bon Singer and Ya Elah, <http://yaelah.strikingly.com/#our-music>

(Sitting) Just allowing yourself to take a breath in and a breath out. Just noticing the breath in and out the body and noticing yourself here in the room. Noticing your feet on the floor. Noticing your head and the air above your head. Now bringing awareness to the two human beings on either side of you, to your right and to your left.

(Walking) We're going to enter now into a silent community meditation. You'll be invited to be together in silent witness and will not need to say anything. Let's begin by standing. Just standing and feeling the weight of the feet on the floor and the contact between the foot and the floor. If sitting for this part works better for you, that's just fine. Standing and feeling the breath. Now turning to the center to see the other people in the room.

Let's walk, or roll, out and fill the aisles, and the center, sides, back, and front of the room. Just noticing the other people as you pass.

Now, still in silence, stopping and finding yourself in a group of three with two other people. Catching each other's eyes and standing facing each other quietly. Beautiful. If it ends up to be four, that's fine also. You can have your eyes open or closed, or alternate between open and closed, as you feel comfortable.

1. Noticing the other people here with you.
Appreciating their presence.

Knowing

they've watched the sunset over the bay,
they've sat on granite high in the mountains,
they've touched their hearts watching the vast stars

held someone they loved,
asked and pleaded for their prayers to be answered
searched for the Holy One, gave up, searched again;

longed for love
been beloved and loving

stayed up late on fire with
תיקון עולם
tikun olam
for something they believed in,
repairing this gorgeous, trembling, flawed world.

Know that this is
אהבה רבה
ahavah rabah,
The Great Love.

(Sitting) Now gently bringing awareness to the person sitting in front of you and the person sitting behind you.

(Walking) In silence or with a word or gesture, giving thanks to the people in your group and walking again.

Now, still in silence, stopping and finding yourself in a group of three with two other people. Catch each other's eyes. Beautiful. If it ends up to be four, that's fine also.

2. Noticing the other people here with you.
Appreciating their presence.
Knowing
they have been uncomfortable,

comforting and comforted
felt sick and gotten well
been lonely and hidden their shame from us

felt not included in the warmth of the tribe;
took the time to sit with a friend
listened deeply without interruption

wept angry tears over loss and injustice
somewhere close or far away;
took less for themselves and gave more
to cool the burning
of the raucous, brilliant Earth.

Know that this is
אב הרחמים
av harachamim,
The WombFatherMotherParent
Of all compassion.

(Sitting)

Noticing two people in different parts of the room from you.
Holding them in mind.

*(Walking) In silence or with a word or gesture, giving thanks to
the people in your group and walking again.*

*Now, still in silence, stopping and finding yourself in a group of
three with two other people. Catch each other's eyes. Beautiful.
If it ends up to be four, that's fine also.*

3. Noticing the people here with you
appreciating their presence.

Once

they gave a dollar,
a sandwich, or a smile
even if they didn't have it to give that day.

They look up recipes and chop vegetables to feed us,
on a day they're busy and tired.

They put a kid in their lap,
or push an elder in their chair.

They were that child, asking for a story.

We hope they'll be that Elder, vibrant and thoughtful.

They've turned an upside-down shovel of dirt
and heard it fall onto a casket,
to honor someone they love.

Know that this is
חסד של אמת
Hesed shel emet,
The truest lovingkindness.

(Sitting) Bringing your awareness to two other people in the room
you haven't had in mind yet. Perhaps someone new to you, whom
you just met or you don't know their name.

*(Walking) In silence or with a word or gesture, giving thanks to
the people in your group and walking again.*

*Now, still in silence, stopping and finding yourself in a group of
three with two other people. Catch each other's eyes. Beautiful.
If it ends up to be four, that's fine also.*

4. Noticing the other people here with you.
Appreciating their presence.

They've been confused, tired, and scared,
said something they didn't mean,
mixed up their emails, texts and posts,
gotten angry and forgotten to breathe,

been distracted and had accidents,
woke up in the middle of the night
with regret over something they said

apologized
made it right
listened when they wanted to jump in –

said: yes!
That makes sense,
I see your point,
how hard for you.

Traveled across town,
across the aisle,
across the world,

longed for and agitated for
true, lasting
peace and justice in the Holy Lands,
and all Lands.

Know that this is
שלום רב
Shalom rav,
The Great Peace.

*(Walking) In silence or with a word or gesture, giving thanks to
the people in your group and walking again back to your seat.*

Knowing that you can do this practice again throughout the year, in
our community and wherever you are, just by bringing these
remembrances to mind when you see someone.

Reba Connell 2016, Elul 5776
after Joanna Macy, "Learning to See Each Other," from "Taking Heart: Spiritual
Exercises for Social Activists," *World As Lover, World As Self*. The Four Divine Abodes of
the Buddha are lovingkindness, compassion, joy in the joy of others, and equanimity.