

## **Finding a balanced mind**

Welcome to the RelationKit mindfulness series. Today we'll become aware of the judgements we make on a daily basis about whether we like, dislike or feel indifferent to something or someone. This can help us begin to question these judgements and let them go. When life throws something hard at us, this practice can help us build up our ability to be level-headed, and to see the bigger picture without taking things personally or getting caught up in the drama.

For example, when it comes to people in our lives, if we are really honest with ourselves, we tend to place people into one of three groups.

In the first group, we have those we get on really well with. In the second, we have those that we don't have much interest in or have little to do with, and finally, in the third, we have those people who we dislike, maybe difficult people, maybe those we even hate because of past life experiences.

A person can move, sometimes quite quickly, from one group to another, for example, after a relationship breakdown. Or when a stranger becomes a friend.

Now while it's normal for our minds to group people in this way, it can cause us to judge people before we know them or keep us close-minded when it comes to our relationships with the people we dislike. If we continue to treat others with disinterest, or with a negative view our relationships with those people will just stay the same, which isn't helpful to anyone and our own minds will still be preoccupied by negative thoughts and feelings, meaning we will continue to suffer.

Remembering feelings of hate and being bitter can eat you up from the inside, it can have quite a toxic presence in your life and can stop you from having meaningful and healthy connections with people, which is one of the most important things in life.

This practice allows us to see past our likes, dislikes and neutral feelings and helps us to build a more balanced and even mind towards all human beings in our world, leading to a more accepting view, where we acknowledge and respect everyone's own path even if it doesn't match our own likes and dislikes. We begin to see the bigger picture. Through this practice we learn that everyone deserves equal regard as human beings.

So, we're going to imagine three groups of people in this practice the ones we like, the ones we don't like and ones we are fairly neutral towards, and then we'll see if we can create a balanced view of and an equal feeling towards all three.

So be calmed by your soothing breath now, taking some cleansing breaths in and out of your body, breathing in through your nostrils and breathing out through pursed lips, to slow your out-breaths down - slowing you down.

Relax your body, softening into gravity and sending your tender breath into any areas that feel tight or tense. Be with any feelings that arise, noticing their flowing nature, and letting thoughts drift through the blue sky of your mind, coming and going like clouds.

Practicing mindfulness of breath, body and thoughts. Coming back each time your notice the mind has left presence.

And once you feel more settled, imagine yourself up in the sky, sitting peacefully on a cloud - light, quiet, feeling balanced and free. You focus on the space and peace around you, and for a moment you remember your own goodness.

Now when you are ready, imagine a loved one - someone you like very much - floating towards you on their very own cloud. Notice if upon seeing them, any thoughts arise, or feelings, occurring in your body. They come and sit in front and slightly to the right of you on their cloud, and you have a good view of them now. You look at them and you begin to notice the reason why you like this person so much, why you wouldn't want them to come to any harm or suffering. You ask yourself the question: why am I attached to this person? And you just listen to the response the mind gives. Now consider this: have they always been a person that you know and love, or has that love grown from something - maybe indifference? Might they always be a person that you love or could that change?

And now imagine a more neutral person coming into your field of awareness. This neutral person is floating towards you on their cloud and sitting in-front of you in the middle - a person you don't know or you have very little to do with; someone you neither like or dislike; perhaps someone you often see on the way to the shop or on the bus. As you take a good look at them now, quietly ask yourself the reason for your indifference. Why is it you don't feel any like or dislike towards them? Just observe any reasons that come up.

Maybe you can consider for a moment the life that they have had, or the road that they have been on until now. It could be any road, couldn't it? A peaceful journey, or one of struggle and grief. Knowing that neutral people just like our loved ones and ourselves, want to feel loved, safe and happy, and, of course, free from suffering.

With this simple awareness we are less separate and more connected than we think. Reflect now if the chance arose and you got to know them, could that neutral person become a friend? Imagine, for example, they joined the same group or college course that you were on. Could they become a person that you like as opposed to a person you didn't have much feeling for at one time? The shift could happen.

And now imagine a person that you don't like very much, maybe you even have feelings of hatred towards or distrust, maybe your ex-partner, an ex-friend, maybe someone else. See them floating into your awareness on their very own cloud, next to the neutral person - just to your left now.

If you feel a strong reaction or pain towards the person you've chosen, breathe with those feelings, and decide whether you need to choose someone else that you will have a milder reaction to for this practice today. Be gentle with yourself, and know that you can come back and practice on that more difficult person at a later date if you wish.

As you begin to look out at this person, from your peaceful cloud and calm presence ask yourself the reason for your dislike towards them. Be open to what you receive. Allow anything to arise: bodily feelings, a tightening of muscles, any feelings or thoughts. Try to be with them without judging them or pushing them away - instead you are gently exploring

their presence and understanding the reasons for your dislike. In what ways do they maybe knock your ego or confidence? Do you dislike this person because they bring up insecurities in you? Breathe with whatever you find there, letting all of that be as it is for now.

And consider this: have they always been someone you disliked? Or maybe they were in one of your other categories for a time? Maybe someone you loved, that shift to a different category happened quite fast, or maybe over some period of time. Maybe you haven't always disliked them, so you have some awareness maybe of what it felt like to once care, maybe deeply, for this person.

And if you can now, opening your heart and mind to consider that person's own unique life and the journey they have been on up 'til now. Perhaps you are aware of their struggles in life - maybe with the mental health or other types of suffering. Knowing that they, too, react and behave from this place of likes, dislikes and neutral. But deep down from your heart and inner goodness, you know that they too deserve to be happy, free from suffering and at peace in the world.

As you look out towards all three of these people now, that sit before you on their clouds, looking for peace and happiness in their worlds, can you, from your even and balanced mind, now offer them equal regard, appreciating and respecting all of their deep wishes to be happy and free from suffering?

Notice how it feels in your body and mind to loosen your judgements and open up the way we think of and view others in our life, free of our likes and dislikes.

And maybe now even looking beyond those people and clouds in front of you to the world below, and to all the people in it deserving of love and freedom from suffering. Can you imagine having a balanced mind and equal regards towards all beings now? Perhaps making this balanced mind, this balanced perspective, your golden rule for your future relationships.

Sending you lots of love and peace today.

See you next time.