



## **Growing to love ourselves**

Welcome to the RelationKit mindfulness series. In this session you will grow in love, care and acceptance towards yourself. We can call this 'loving kindness'.

We go gently, remembering at any time, if it feels too awkward or too much then just come back to your breath to bring you back to the present moment and to feel steady and grounded. Returning to giving yourself this loving kindness when it feels right. And that might be on another day.

Let's begin by finding a comfy position, sitting or lying down. Letting your eyes close fully or just a little. And you can take a few deeper breaths, to help you become more aware of your body and to bring you in to the present moment.

Allow your breath to come back to a natural rhythm and flow now, so letting go of any control over the breath, and gently watch the breath exactly as it is.

And we'll take brief body scan now, to relax the body and to calm your mind, so on the flow of your next out-breath, take your attention down to your feet. Notice any feelings there. Now coming up into your ankles, feeling into this part of your body, and then flow your awareness up into your lower legs, then your knees and then your thighs, feeling your bottom resting upon the seat or the ground beneath you, and now expanding your awareness into your hips and pelvis, your belly and lower back, taking your attention up through your trunk, into your chest and upper back, expanding up into your shoulders now, and then through your arms and hands and fingers, then travel your awareness back up towards your neck and your head, and now expand your attention out to include your whole body, so that you're feeling your whole body as one, feeling your whole body from inside out, breathing there with your whole body. Let the feelings of your breath hold you tenderly in each moment.

Coming back to your breath whenever you notice the mind has been carried away, feeling your body breathing in and feeling your body breathing out.

And when you feel ready, start to bring a gentle awareness to your heart area - to the place where our emotions come from and where the quality of love comes from. This might mean you bring your attention to your physical heart and the spaces around that, or maybe you might like to bring your attention to the area at the centre of your chest, known as your 'heart centre' in meditation practices, and imagine for moment that you are breathing in and out of that place.

Your calming breath beginning to soften this part of you, to soften whatever you feel there in this moment. It may help to invite your hand to rest there at your 'heart space' as you breath here in this way, and that gentle touch of your hand upon your heart may remind you that you are bringing a loving kindness to your moment-to-moment experience, and to yourself now. Keep your focus on the area of your heart, breathing as if from this place, and, if you wish, as you breath from the place of your heart, feel as though your inhales are inviting a warm white light to come up from your heart, and this warm white light which

is your loving kindness, begins to grow and expand on each of your in-breaths. With each in-breath, feel this gentle light emerging and growing from your heart area.

And now on each of your out-breaths, feel as though that warm white light begins to flow out from your heart and through you, through your chest and belly, arms and legs - through your entire body now.

So you're breathing in, feeling the light emerge and grow brighter, and you're breathing out, spreading this loving light through you, and allowing your whole body, your whole self, to be bathed in this light of loving kindness.

Continuing to breathe in this way as you begin to offer yourself words of kindness and care; words that you maybe need to hear right now, for example:

*May I be filled with loving kindness.*

*May I be gentle with myself.*

*May I be free from harm.*

*May I be at peace and happy.*

If this is all new to you, try to be open to this. Open your heart and mind to what you need to hear - words of love to yourself that nourish you deeply. Maybe your own phrases naturally come to you, or you use the examples:

*May I be filled with loving kindness.*

*May I be gentle with myself.*

*May I be free from harm.*

*May I be at peace and happy.*

As you repeat these phrases, notice what comes up for you: any physical feelings, thoughts, pleasant or unpleasant. Maybe you notice some unwillingness to say these things to yourself, or a restlessness. Just notice, not judging, just paying attention to what comes up. And if it's hard for you to bring up any sense of kindness and love for yourself or to repeat those phrases then can you bring to mind a person or even a pet, past or present, who has loved you not matter what - really feel that love from them now. Once you have sense of love that they hold or held for you, can you return to giving this love to yourself, repeating the phrases.

And whenever you notice that your mind has gone off into thoughts, to do lists, plans... have a loving kindness towards this too, no judgments, no cruel inner voice, just gently acknowledging that and drawing your attention back to the present moment by staying close to your breath and any feelings in your body. Your breath is like a soothing, balm for your body and mind.

You are holding yourself now with a loving attention and your inner attitude has a flavour of loving kindness and care. Whatever comes up through your awareness, whether that's a thought, an image, or a feeling, can you meet it with a loving kindness now?

Continue to repeat the phases if you wish and feel the strength, light and warmth of this love within you - your loving kindness - filling the space of you; filling your whole being.

And just when you feel ready, start to take some deeper in-breaths and longer out-breaths, and come back to feeling your body supported by the seat or the ground beneath you. Feel that restful connection. And in your own time, gently blink your eyes back open if they've been closed, and simply notice how everything feels now.

Remember this practice of loving kindness can be done at any time, just stopping, finding your tender breath and giving yourself a loving phrase or two.

Take care of yourself and I'll see you next time.