

Mona Chopra
Teachings for Uncertain Times
February 6, 2017



Hello, and welcome to today's practice. My name is Mona Chopra and I'll be offering today's practice as part of a series run by Tricycle entitled "Teachings for Uncertain Times." Today's practice is offered in solidarity with and was inspired by the Black Lives Matter movement.

In light of the disproportionate number of black men who have been killed by police officers in recent times here in the United States, this practice is a way of working with our own hearts and minds to address the seeds of aggression, reactivity, and violence, the seeds of othering that may exist within ourselves so that we can be increasing sources of peace in the world. This practice is an adaptation of the traditional *metta* or lovingkindness meditation practice. My inspiration comes from the way that the metta practice has been taught by Sharon Salzberg, Pema Chödrön, John Makransky, and by my conversations with Kimberly Brown at the Interdependence Project here in New York.

It can be so easy to polarize, begin to blame, and to increase our sense of distance from other human beings. We so easily say that we would never do that, so easily close off our hearts to a whole group of people whether they are a race of people or a group of people, such as police officers. This practice is offered as a way of looking within ourselves to see what are the seeds within ourselves that we can address. Those same seeds that lead to violence, aggression, and the kinds of behaviors we've been seeing that have ultimately led to killings, particularly of black men, in this country.

So begin by getting into a comfortable seated position. You can be seated on your cushion if you have one. It is completely fine to be sitting on the floor or on a chair. You just want to allow yourself to be very comfortable. Keep your spine nice and erect, uplifted, and allow the front body to be soft. Your eyes can be softly opened or closed for this practice. And now just allow your attention to rest on your breath. Simply come in contact with being here in this moment with your breath. Simply observe your breath, and if you'd like, as a way of connecting in with your heart, you can place your hands over your heart for a moment and connect with the place we're going to be working with in this practice.

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Now, bring to mind an image or a sense of a person who you consider has had your best interest at heart. This is often known as a benefactor, someone who has wished you well at some point in your life, who you have felt really had your best interest at heart. Bring this being to mind, an image perhaps, or a sense of this being before you, and begin to receive their wishes for your deepest wellbeing. You can imagine these wishes coming from their heart center through to yours. If it helps, you can imagine these wishes coming to you in the form of a soft shower of healing light rays from their heart center to yours, wishing you the deepest wellbeing. Allow these wishes to penetrate your being as you hear these phrases. “May you be safe and free from inner and outer danger. May you be happy and free from the causes of mental distress. May you be healthy and free from the causes of physical disease and discomfort. May you live life with ease.” Allow yourself to be filled with these wishes, this radiance coming into your being, filling you.

And now you join this benefactor and begin to offer these wishes to yourself. “May this one have safety. May this one have happiness. May this one have health. May this one live in ease.” Allow yourself to receive these wishes. Feel yourself filling up with a genuine authentic wish for your deepest wellbeing.

Now allow these images to dissolve as you take a breath in. Breathe in those good wishes as you exhale. Now, calling to mind an image or a sense of all those black men, women, and children who have been killed by law enforcement officers in the United States in the last two years. The numbers are disturbing and shocking, but these numbers represent human beings, each one a son or daughter. Each one perhaps a mother, father, sister, brother, lover, partner, cousin, aunt, uncle, or dear friend. Call to mind a sense of these beings and begin to offer them these wishes for their deepest wellbeing. You might imagine these wishes coming from your heart center through to theirs.

“May you be safe and free from inner and outer danger. May you be happy, free from the causes of mental distress. May you be healthy and strong, free from the causes of physical discomfort

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and disease. May you be at ease.” Continually offering wishes for the deepest wellbeing of these beings, from your heart center to theirs. Perhaps you mentally recite these phrases. Perhaps you simply feel this shower of soft light rays coming from your heart center through to theirs.

Breathing in and breathing out, dissolving the image of these beings. As you now call to mind an image or sense of all those law enforcement officers who have been involved in these killings, all these law enforcement officers who are also someone's son or someone's daughter. Who may be someone's mother, father, sister, brother, lover, partner, aunt, uncle, or friend. They are products of a racist society, products of an aggressive society and world. Touch into what it feels like as you begin to offer them these wishes for their deepest wellbeing. You might imagine these wishes coming from your heart center through to theirs in the form of light rays, or you might simply repeat the phrases. “May you be safe and free from inner and outer danger. May you be happy, free from the causes of mental distress. May you be healthy and strong, free from the causes of physical suffering. May you live life with ease.”

Continue to offer these phrases to this group of beings. If at any point, you feel the need to reconnect, you can simply make physical contact with your own heart or take a breath.

And now breathe in deeply. And as you exhale, dissolve the image of these beings. Stay present with your breath, with your body, with this moment. As you now call to mind all beings through out all space and time that have lived life with fear, and begin to offer them these phrases. “May you be safe. May you be happy. May you be healthy. May you live with ease. May you be safe. May you be happy. May you be healthy. May you live with ease.”

Allowing these wishes for the deepest wellbeing of all those who have ever lived with fear to emanate from your being, from your heart center through to theirs as you continually offer these wishes, these phrases.

Taking a deep breath in here, exhaling as you dissolve the image of these beings.

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Now call to mind an image of all beings who have ever caused fear to another, and offer them these phrases. “May you be safe. May you be happy. May you be healthy. May you live with ease.” Offering these phrases to all beings that have ever inflicted fear on one another.

Breathing in here, breathing out, dissolving the image of these beings as you now allow yourself to open up your heart in all directions and dimensions. Completely expansive, above, below, right, left, and throughout all corners of the globe. Allow yourself to offer all beings in all places through all space and time, wishes for their deepest wellbeing. You might imagine these wishes emanating from all corners and sides of your own heart out into the universe. “May you be safe. May we all be safe. May you be happy. May we all be happy. May you be healthy. May we all be healthy. May you live life with ease. May we, all beings, live life with ease.”

Breathe in here, and as you breathe out, allow yourself to dissolve these images and dissolve any effort. Return to simple presence here, noticing your breath and your body seated where you are, and take a moment to offer gratitude to yourself for taking time to practice and work with your heart and mind in this way. Thank you so much for joining for this practice.