

## Handout #12

# Equanimity Meditation

### Calming the mind

Focus your attention on your breath. Use one of the various breathing meditations (counting the breaths, the nine-round breathing meditation) or mindfulness meditations to settle the mind into the moment and into a more concentrated state.

### Motivation

Sit comfortably and generate the strong intention to do this meditation in order to overcome self-centered bias and judgments and to develop the mind of perfect equanimity and balance toward others.

### The actual meditation

Imagine in the space in front of you three people: someone you like, someone you dislike, and someone you feel indifferent toward. Keep these three images in your mind throughout the meditation.

First, focus on your friend. Allow your feelings for that person to arise strongly. Feel your conviction that this person is definitely and truly a *friend*, that is, a person who is good to you and fulfills your needs and wishes. Also, feel how you really want this person to be happy. Identify yourself with these good feelings.

Now, shift your attention to your enemy, the person you dislike and who is not kind to you, who does not satisfy your needs; who annoys you and makes you angry; who hurts you. Regard this person carefully. Look carefully at the feelings you have about this person.

Finally, shift your attention to the so-called stranger, the person you just barely know but whom you neither like nor dislike. Look carefully at that person and note carefully your feelings of indifference.

Now, consider and recognize that the nature of your relationships with each of these three people and the labels you have put on each of them are based solely on what they do or don't do for you at this point in time. Think of people who have been your friend but then became your enemy, and vice-versa, or strangers who became friends or enemies. Each of these labels is temporary and impermanent, just what the situation is at the current time.

Now, move your attention back to your friend and imagine a situation that would cause the friendship to end. Imagine your friend turning against you; experience the resentment and anger and hurt that you would feel in such a situation. Do you still feel warm friendly feelings toward that person? Do you still wish him or her well, want that person to be

happy? Where is your “friend” now?

Remember that this person was not your friend before you were acquainted. Recognize how easily this person could cease to be your friend now, just as you have imagined.

Think to yourself that there is no sound reason for feeling kind and loving toward only the friend of this moment. Relationships have changed in the past and will continue to change. Today’s friend can become tomorrow’s enemy.

Now, move your attention to the present enemy. Imagine a situation in which you could be drawn together and become close – a common interest, a word of praise or kindness. Look at that person and your feelings toward them very carefully. Are your feelings softening? Becoming warmer? You *can* learn to feel warmly toward your enemies. This has happened before and will happen again. Why do we hold so strongly to the concept that this person is definitely “enemy”?

Now, move your attention to the stranger. Imagine how one act of kindness or anger from this person could immediately turn him or her into a friend or an enemy, respectively. There is no inherent, definite stranger there. There is no sound reason for the feelings of indifference that we hold on to. Remember that your present friend and your present enemy were both strangers to you beforehand; and this enemy could become a friend or an enemy now.

Maintain your awareness of these three people in front of you. Think about the fragile impermanence of these relationships. It is only your misconceived belief in the concreteness of these labels of friend, enemy, and stranger that holds your mind back from the possibility of change and fluidity.

Your friend, enemy, and stranger all want happiness just as much as you do; in this respect, we are all equal. Also, everyone is equal in having the potential to develop their minds to the fullest extent and to achieve ultimate clarity and compassion. The differences that we see in people are superficial, based only on our mistaken and narrow self-centered views. In fact, everyone is equal in deserving our care and compassion.

None of this means that we should not discriminate at all; on a practical level our ability to distinguish between actions and individuals is necessary. Naturally we feel closer to some people are wise to keep our distance from others. This is not in any way contradictory to the meditation above.

The point of the meditation is to develop equal concern, equal regard, for everyone, for their well-being, whether they help or harm us at this point in time, and to see that the labels that we put on others are often arbitrary, mistaken, and very changeable.

## **Dedication**

Finally, dedicate your positive energy and insights to the well-being and happiness of all living beings.

### *Colophon:*

Composed by Ven. Connie Miller based on Kathleen McDonald's Equilibrium Meditation in *How to Meditate*, Wisdom Publications, 1984 [[www.wisdompubs.org](http://www.wisdompubs.org)].