

Verses for the Four Immeasurables

Equanimity

May I be free from preference and prejudice.
May I know things just as they are.
May I experience the world knowing me just as I am.
May I see into whatever arises.

Loving kindness

May I be happy, well, and at peace.
May I open to things just as they are.
May I experience the world opening to me just as I am.
May I welcome whatever arises.

Compassion

May I be free of suffering, harm, and disturbance.
May I accept things just as they are.
May I experience the world accepting me just as I am.
May I serve whatever arises.

Joy

May I enjoy the activities of life itself.
May I enjoy things just as they are.
May I experience the world taking joy in all that I do.
May I know what to do whatever arises.

Guidelines for Meditation on the Four Immeasurables

Divide your meditation period into three sections.

The first section should be 15-20 minutes, basically the time the body, mind, and heart take to settle down from the activities of daily life. Rest in the experience of breathing or use other methods to let things settle.

In the second section, the main part of the meditation session, say the lines of the verse slowly, one by one. With each line, experience what reactions arise. How does your body react to the line? What emotions arise? And what stories start to run? Don't try to change the reactions: just open to the experience of them.

When you have said all four lines, rest for a few minutes, experiencing what is arising, or, if nothing is arising, then just rest. Then say each line of the verse again, slowly, as before. Repeat this process for the main part of the meditation session.

About 10 minutes before the end of the session, let the verses go, and just rest. Don't fall into distraction, don't try to control your experience, and don't work at anything. If you need to, rest in the experience of breathing.

These verses are not aspirations or aphorisms. Each line will put you in touch with the parts of you that are open or closed to the particular immeasurable. As you experience the reactions in attention, the energy in the reactions is gradually transformed into the immeasurable. Don't try to chart progress, as the process is not linear.

When you can feel the immeasurable in you consistently in your practice and you find that it arises naturally during the day, then start extending the immeasurable to others.

Begin the extension by changing each line of the verse to "May all those close to me..." You may find very different kinds of reactions arising with this change. Don't be too concerned about defining exactly who is close to you. We all feel closer to some people than others.

When you have stabilized this step, then extend the focus to "May all those who are suffering..."

Continue the extension to people in the world for whom you have no strong feelings, and, eventually, to people whom you dislike or have little respect for. Change the wording of the verses accordingly.

Eventually, you cultivate the immeasurable for all beings, "May all beings..."

Work with each immeasurable for at least a month so that you have a clear experience of it, at least with respect to you.