



CULTIVATING COMPASSION FOR YOURSELF

Welcoming Presence Meditation

1. Get grounded by taking several deep breaths and easing into an interior silence.
2. As your breathing continues, imagine and settle into an interior space that feels safe, grounding, peaceful, and receptive. It may help to imagine this as a specific place, either real or imaginary, that feels welcoming and sacred. For example, you can imagine a living room, a quiet chapel, a meadow, a beach, a warm cabin—any place that soothes you, centers you, and fills you with the promise of sacred presence.
3. As you relax into this interior space, intrusions may invade the quiet. These intrusions might be emotions, thoughts, inner voices, fantasies, body sensations, urges, or any other interior movement that ripples into your inner calm. Instead of shooing them away, being carried away by their power, or judging yourself for their presence within you, welcome them as guests within your interior space, your place of quiet. Here are some tips to assist you:
 - › Refer to the intrusion in the third person. Instead of thinking *I am stressed right now*, think *Stress is present within me*.

- › Express a welcoming attitude toward this intrusion. *I see you anxiety. Welcome. I allow you to be present within me.*
 - › Recognize the intrusion as a guest. *I trust you are here for a reason; you have some invitation for me. I may not know what it is, but I trust that you come with a gift.*
4. Ask the guest to express itself as an image—perhaps as an object like a coffeepot, chattering teeth, or a hive of buzzing bees; perhaps as a person or creature. Then, in whatever way feels right, honor and preserve this guest by placing it somewhere within your interior space. Perhaps you wrap it in a prayer shawl and place it on an altar. Maybe you place it in a gift box and put it on a shelf to open later. You might invite the guest to sit in a chair next to you. Or you can choose any other way of honoring its presence and allowing it to remain until a later time when you will become more fully acquainted.
 5. Return to a sense of inner peace and gentle presence, reconnecting with your breath as needed to still and center you. Whenever you notice an interruption in this state of relaxed presence, welcome and receive that interruption as a guest in the same way that you welcomed and received other intrusions.
 6. Invite a sacred presence you know—the Buddha, Allah, God, Jesus, the loving energy of the universe, a healing image, a beloved ancestor—to come and be with you and your guests in whatever way feels calming, healing, or restoring.
 7. Before surfacing from this interior space, notice the gift you are receiving from the practice and allow that gift to flow throughout your entire body and extend into every part of your inner world.
 8. In preparing to conclude this practice, discern if there is an invitation for how you might allow the gift of this practice to extend into your daily life.

(Note: This practice can be engaged through many different modes, of which interior meditation is but one. If you feel compelled, try this practice through other activities: writing, making a collage, drawing, working with clay, or playing music.

IN THE MOMENT

Over the course of your day, when you become aware of an interior movement threatening to possess you (a strong emotion, a powerful impulse to act in a certain way, a relentless inner voice, a bodily sensation, or a fantasy that has gripped you), ground yourself by taking some breaths. Notice the movement that is flooding you by saying to yourself, *I notice that _____ has come; _____ is present within me. I greet you _____.* Place the movement somewhere safe and contained within you.⁸