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Contemplative Pedagogy in Times of Grief and Uncertainty: Teaching in a Global Pandemic

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We are teaching during a global pandemic, where all sense of normalcy has disappeared. How can we, as contemplative educators, provide an anchor for students' grief and practice sitting with discomfort to develop resiliency to endure this time of great uncertainty? We have an opportunity to authentically reframe this time of social upheaval as an opportunity to address a series of adaptive challenges. Contemplative practices can allow us to cooperatively and ethically respond to the myriad of challenges confronting us during a global pandemic. But, first, educators have a major role to play in the classroom in making hope more convincing than despair (Williams, 1989). I offer a reflection on ways to engage the whole student, invite strong emotions into the classroom, and build a community built on trust to collectively navigate uncertain terrain while developing personal agency. Some major questions addressed in this paper are the following: As we collectively navigate this new and uncertain pandemic landscape, how can we help our students stay afloat and not mire in despair? How can we stay attentive to widespread cultural and social losses while offering authentic hope? How do we allow space for our students to grieve the state of the world, to understand what we can and cannot control, and help guide them toward an inner sense of personal existence on the Earth with the power to make choices during this altogether important and decisive time?

INTRODUCTION

We are collectively navigating the felt landscape of the loss of normalcy, the fear of economic decline, and the loss of connection during the COVID-19 pandemic. Massive social

changes have occurred at breakneck speeds as we continue to watch the steep increase in deaths caused by COVID-19. With our normal anchors afloat, we may grapple with how to prioritize learning in the new, pandemic learning environment.

We must understand that we are in a state of collective grief. We might be finding ourselves at any given moment in one or more of the many stages of grief (Kessler, 2019). Collectively and individually, we may be feeling numb or depressed, or we may be existing in a state of denial without any idea of when the sadness will end. We may feel angry at the level of controls imposed on society in efforts to control the spread of the virus. Some of us are attempting to bargain our way out, thinking that if we change behavior for a short time then everything will return to “normal.”

However, can we use the pandemic to examine what “normal” we want to return to? Under “normal” circumstances, few of us were thriving and experiencing a consistent state of wellness, which is understood holistically as a combination of physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual elements (Collin, 2017). Can we navigate the stages of grief to eventually reach a state of acceptance, wherein the power lies in understanding that we can make informed choices? Do we return to the destructive systems that deem us powerless, or do we choose to wade into uncertain waters, envisioning and taking action to build new systems out of the debris left behind by COVID-19? The former situation is inevitable unless we collectively work to change the narrative and co-create a societal guidance system prioritizing social and ecological wellbeing.

An externality of the COVID-19 pandemic is that the fragility of the unsustainable systems abundant in modern society has been exposed. It remains open whether it would be wise to reassemble systems based on an old model that does not support life and cannot persist indefinitely. If we consider our choices using natural models of coexistence over billions of years of life on Earth, we will see that natural systems are not dependent on endless, linear gains. Natural laws are cyclical and include population-level checks and balances on the growth of all species (Fowler, 1981). Whereas the global human population was 2.5 billion in 1950, it is currently at 7.7 billion people and could grow to around 8.5 billion in

2030, 9.7 billion in 2050, and 10.9 billion in 2100 (UN, 2019). Pandemics are a severe demonstration of how our species, *Homo sapiens*, is not exempt from negative environmental effects that occur naturally as a result of exponential population growth.

Humans are rightful members of this awe-inspiring planet and we can tap into the genius of how to live gracefully by using nature as a model (Benyus, 2002). As a biologist, I seek to teach students about how life works so we can then use nature as a lens to design new, sustainable systems based on billions of years of evolution of life on Earth. Yet, as STEM faculty, I struggled initially to discover how contemplative practices intersected with my discipline, and I initially hesitated to introduce them into my classrooms. At the same time, with over a decade of teaching, I had witnessed increases in anxiety, depression, and overall feelings of despair in the student population. I completed a 200-hour yoga teacher training program, and our academic community was concurrently introducing a wellness-based residential living community. Neuroscientists studying mindfulness and happiness were guest speakers on campus. I learned more about the basic research of mindfulness in the classroom, including improvements in students' attention (Jha, 2007; Tang et al., 2007), cognition (Zeidan, 2010), and cognitive flexibility (Moore 2009). I read studies that demonstrated that contemplative practices and mindfulness-based activities decrease stress (American College of Health Association, 2015a&b) and anxiety (Godbey & Courage, 1994) in college students, both of which are cited as the most treated mental health condition in college students. For these reasons, I felt obligated as a contemplative practitioner and biologist to interweave contemplative practices into my classroom experience.

I have tended to use mindfulness in the classroom as an arrival and "get ready to learn" activity. I dim lights in first three to five minutes of class. The invitation is to put everything aside and close eyes or focus the gaze on a single point. Then, I use a short activity to invite students to intentionally become aware of the surrounding environment, and then I guide them inward to the body and finally ask them to focus on their breath. I sometimes will read a short quote about how mindfulness affects neuroplasticity, their ability to learn new information, and the

sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems. I also emphasize how mindfulness can be a lesson about what is and what isn't within our control (Hanson, 2009). At this point in the activity, we take three deep breaths together, and end the activity by slowly opening the eyes or lifting the gaze before we move into course content.

Although, I have not conducted any formal analyses on the effectiveness of this contemplative activity in the classroom, I did receive a handful of unsolicited and positive feedback from students including these selected quotes from course evaluation from first-year student biology course (spring 2018):

- *I loved the moments of mindfulness at the beginning of each class!*
- *Dr. Hill really makes an effort to make the classroom an environment that promotes learning.*
- *I really like the mindfulness exercise we do before each class. It helps to settle everyone in and get us ready to learn. I wish more professors did this.*
- *Breathing exercises in the beginning of class help me to focus.*
- *I learned a lot about science but also self-care and being mindful when things get overwhelming.*

The arrival activity also invites a specific link to the biological sciences because we are living specimens. Through practices that encourage embodiment, I can invite students to dive deep into their organic existence. Using embodiment practices coupled with visualization exercises, I invite students into a working cell in their body to explore cellular respiration or the expression of the genetic code. I use exercises reflecting on the unity of life by examining the chemical basis of all life or the natural laws of energy transfer and transformation. We explore our human existence by contemplating deep evolutionary time and billions of years of dramatic changes on Earth. Regardless of our discipline, can we use contemplative practices to help us remain within the uncertainty

of living through a pandemic, stay with our collective discomfort, and brazenly witness the death and loss of people and systems, so that we can be reminded of the brilliance of life?

THE ROLE OF CONTEMPLATIVE TEACHING DURING A PANDEMIC

Students arrive in their first year of college with big questions, such as: “What are my most deeply felt values? Do I have a mission or purpose in my life? What kind of person do I want to become? What sort of world do I want to create?” (Astin et al., 2011). These topics are precisely relevant now as young people come of age today during a pandemic. Educators are part of the front lines as we engage young people in shaping our collective future by developing skills, namely resilience, empathy, collaboration, and initiative (Falik & Frey, 2018). As economist Daniel Barbezat offers, “somehow we have lost our way in higher education and abandoned our mission to create lives of purpose and strong ethical and creative minds” (Barbezat & Bush, 2014).

Contemplative practices vary greatly but all have an inward (“first-person”) focus that creates opportunities for greater connection and insight. Contemplation is at the heart of all great scholarship, as the first-person perspective characteristic of contemplative pedagogy helps to connect both the mental and emotional dimensions of the material. Contemplative pedagogy aims to build students’ capacity, deepen understanding of complexity, generate compassion and resiliency, and explore their human nature and “inner world” (Barbezat & Bush, 2014). It is through these practices that they will find themselves entwined in the big questions, and perhaps begin to investigate their unique role in the solution (Gillespie & Litfin, 2017).

The critical aspect of all contemplative pedagogy is for students to discover their own internal reactions without having to adopt any specific ideology (Bush & Barbezat, 2014). We can use contemplative practices to cultivate open minds and encourage students to engage creatively within a values ethic in a complicated global society. When educators choose contemplative teaching exercises with a strong pedagogical intention and incorporate a mixture of participatory, inclusive, and relevant activities, we offer students the opportunity to be direct participants with

the course material. Whether the COVID-19 pandemic is the topic of interest, or the systems that are directly and indirectly affected by the pandemic, we offer our students a disciplinary lens to enter into a first-person narrative with the course material. Ultimately, the goal is for students to gain empowerment in their learning, in themselves, and in the world. But, we first must pause to authentically recognize and relate to our own capacities in the present global crisis while recognizing and respecting the students' capacities as well.

Allow a moment to grasp the situation at hand. Students and teachers alike are unexpectedly taking on responsibilities outside of learning, including elder care and childcare. Students may lack accessibility to technology including devices and internet service. Students with accessibility services are suddenly without community or the usual on-campus safety nets (Anderson, 2020). As the economy suffers from steep declines, young people (under 25) and low-income workers, especially women, have suffered more severe effects (BBC News, 2020). The turmoil caused by COVID-19 is disproportionately affecting Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC), especially Black Americans (Garg et al., 2020). Even if students are fortunate enough to escape the worst of the pandemic, they are still tasked with completing an enormous amount of work under a digital stranglehold. There is much to grieve alongside new, daily challenges in the face of uncertainty.

As contemplative educators, we must authentically and sensitively engage the whole student, physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual. Consider that college students are more affected by stress and anxiety than other groups (American College of Health Association, 2015a&b; Godbey & Courage, 1994), and note that these data were analyzed prior to a global pandemic. Before students can learn, even within contemplative exercises, they must have a sense of health and safety and equitable access to resources. They must also be in an environment built on trust and authentic relationships among students and educators. One powerful way to build trust is to take students' emotional responses to the course material and their lived experience seriously (Ray, 2018).

The Vermont Agency of Education (AOE, 2020) recently provided curricular guiding principles during the COVID-19 pandemic for K-12 ed-

ucators, which include, in the following order: “health and safety, equity, relationships, and remote learning.” Conversations about the pedagogical implications of the sudden shift to remote learning in higher education are occurring (Lederman, 2020). Yet the U.S. Higher Education Commission has no direct information for faculty in HEIs teaching during the pandemic (USHEC, 2020). Might we use the AOE guiding principles to re-anchor higher education in understanding that students’ health, safety, and access to resources are all pre-requisites for developing an environment for learning during a pandemic? As contemplative educators, can we use our pedagogy to continue to build relationships based on trust and welcome emotions in a socially distanced world?

A compassionate response and opportunities to heal begin with the act of perceiving each person as a variation of oneself. We must acknowledge that each of us is having a different personal experience. The different set of circumstances each of us is navigating is a direct result of our historical and contemporary conditions. These conditions facilitate the transfer of power and privilege to those who identify as White to the detriment of others (Johnson, 2006). It is exceedingly clear that different groups are affected differently by the pandemic depending on race and ethnicity. Not only has recent research suggested that Black and Brown populations are disproportionately affected by COVID-19 (Laurencin & McClinton, 2020; Garg et al., 2020), but, aside from health issues, the onset of the pandemic correlated with an increase in racist attacks aimed at Asian Americans (Loffman, 2020).

Truly transformational learning requires an integration of pedagogy and wellbeing. Scholar bell hooks calls this “engaged pedagogy,” and it involves an understanding of oneself, accountability for one’s actions, and self-care through discomfort and uncertainty (hooks, 2010). Contemplative pedagogy, infused with trauma-informed embodiment practices, has an important role to play in our classrooms during a pandemic. Although a connection to one another and oneself works in direct opposition to a culture of domination (Ensler, 2013), it can be a challenge to mindfully bear witness our body’s pain and trauma.

Trauma experts agree that the body holds onto trauma and can leave us feeling unsafe, helpless, afraid, and overwhelmed (Treleaven,

2018). If not engaged with intention and precaution, contemplative practices can cause further damage by exacerbating trauma (Magee, 2019). A principle of contemplative pedagogy is, due to the intricacies of these practices, that teachers must have personal experience to cultivate their own awareness (Barbezat & Bush, 2014). Without coming back, again and again, to how we personally experience our practices over time, we lack the attention to how the experience of our traumas also changes over time.

As we continue to engage with our personal contemplative practices and bring them into the classroom experience, we are enabled to navigate life, with all its discomforts, in a way that is unique to our true calling. What we do with the activated and transformed energy is personal and different for each of us, and, if used wisely, can be used to heal. The inner work of healing is the first step to transforming our communities (Magee, 2019) so that we move in parallel toward a state of wellness. At their core, contemplative practices teach us that, with practice, we learn how to hold life's paradoxes with compassion, love, joy, equanimity, and curiosity (Ryan, 2017). However, the impact of the practice will depend on the capacity of the student to participate.

POWERFUL CONTEMPLATIVE EXERCISES FOR UNCERTAIN TIMES

Students in our classrooms are navigating thorny terrain, and they are looking to us for anchor points and inspiration. First, we must build trust by recognizing and valuing their feelings such as dissatisfaction, discontent, and inaction. We must take all emotions seriously and offer time and space for them in the classroom. We can offer students opportunities to reflect intra- and inter-personally on the affective domain of the course material and how it intersects with their real life experiences.

In order for social progress to occur, we must first access a new understanding and awareness that galvanizes a behavioral shift in how we relate to our environment (Mah y Busch, 2014). We can offer classroom activities to ignite a similar spark in students. Along the way, we can provide examples of positive action, explicate the history of major social movements, and emphasize the need to celebrate small achievements in

light of a bigger, more resilient and adaptive vision of the world. We can celebrate positive change as being a sequence of small actions taken for a greater good, as patience and deliberate action are key in any social change (Solnit, 2009). Then, we can use contemplative practices to help guide them into knowing themselves and how their personal action can be aligned with their purpose. In this synchronous space, students may come to realize the possibility and potential to make great change.

In Appendix I, I offer a classroom exercise designed to cultivate patience in the midst of uncertainty. The first part of the exercise is intrapersonal and uses controlled breathing (*Dirga Pranayama*, the yogic three-part breath) to cultivate the vital life force energy or *prāna* (in Sanskrit). I also integrate a gratitude practice to expand personal appreciation and agency so that one may see beyond present conditions towards connection and a more hopeful future. This interpersonal component involves active listening and witnessing in dyads modeled after Macy and Johnstone (2012). I invite the reader to actively engage with the activity, and, through participation, notice the personal effect of the practice.

While the prior exercise seeks to cultivate self-awareness, compassion, and gratitude, a modified *mettā* meditation can be adapted as a classroom activity designed to activate sociability and goodwill, and it is available in Appendix II. *Mettā* meditation is a powerful activity designed to cultivate non-hatred and non-fear in order to become stronger, more stable, and more centered. It is from a resilient and grounded place that we can continue moving forward in a positive way to address the many struggles of oppression and create justice for our communities and the Earth.

As we continue to teach in a pandemic, I encourage contemplative educators to carefully consider the intention for and design of the contemplative exercise. Write down the intention of the contemplative practice. Share the intention with your students before teaching. Incorporate both an intrapersonal and interpersonal component to the exercise. Include trauma-informed practices. Before beginning, ask students to participate with an affirmation. Always offer the choice to unobtrusively opt out.

Some impactful activities may include the following:

- Use mindfulness as an intrapersonal activity to sit with feelings, including discomfort, and to patiently embrace uncertainty
- Guide embodiment practices that facilitate first-person reflections on feelings and sensations
- Incorporate simple activities meant to express gratitude and foster hope
- Follow in-class exercises with reflections meant to assist in transforming grief into hope, where students find their personal resolve and unique places to intervene
- Design interpersonal activities that include expressing authenticity and vulnerability
- Scaffold interpersonal dialogue with active listening and holding space
- Develop narratives that encourage viewing challenges as opportunities
- Design activities that ask students to reflect on how they interact with digital platforms and how it affects their attention and physical and emotional effects
- Invite students to actively participate in contemplative activities by creating opportunities for generative and creative responses
- Cultivate a true co-learning environment by admitting no one has all the answers but we can meet the situation creatively

We can use contemplative teaching to help guide to students toward an inner orientation to life. This inner work seeks to foster intrinsic hope, which is a type of hope that emphasizes emotional non-attachment to outcomes in the external world. Intrinsic hope promotes a passionate love of the world where individuals aspire to make positive change but avoid burnout by not getting caught up in attaining particular results (Davies, 2018). The inner work to cultivate intrinsic hope is the work of contemplative educators, and we can share the process to empower our students and help them realize their own potential. Intrinsic hope is con-

tagious, but it must come from an authentic place. Imagine what we can achieve when we collectively realize that we are not helpless victims but rather have been given a set of circumstances that offer us a chance to create a better world? Is it not our collective duty to practice and teach to the contemplative domain and help facilitate the inner work so that we can fully realize our collective purposes in our current larger society?

CONCLUSION

Whatever your discipline, it is one of our cumulative roles as contemplative educators to demonstrate the importance of slowing down while standing alongside students. This will allow time for us to collectively grieve during a pandemic, as well as envision creative new solutions. Contemplating whether the systems that govern our society are resilient, regenerative, and adaptable is relevant to all of us. We are at a point where the pandemic is inviting us to realize a new way of living. If we can come to agree what is most vital, then the pandemic offers an opportunity to magnify the power of our collective will. How we, as contemplative educators, choose to intentionally engage our students at this extraordinary time to pave the path forward as we make choices on whether to tie the broken ends back together or continue to courageously peel back the layers to envision a new way of co-existing as a species (Eisenstein, 2020). Without opportunities to inquire deeply, students will likely repeat the past, thus sacrificing the potential for a creative response. Let this paper be a call to faculty across the globe to respond to this call with radical contemplative pedagogy. Might this pandemic offer opportunities for shifting the priority from “productivity” within academic life, so that “rigor” becomes “vigor” (A. Acosta, personal communication, September 22, 2019) or a vital movement toward living a full and holistic life (Frohlich, 2019)?

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APPENDIX I

First, I encourage educators to share the basics of the exercise, as well as the intention, and offer students the opportunity to opt out at any time while encouraging participation. Ask for a confirmation from the students, i.e., “thumbs up,” to ensure they are ready to begin.

Find a comfortable seat or reclined position. Any movement and noises are welcome as you settle in: stretch neck, legs, arms up, sighs, flutter lips, etc. (*Allow time for this trauma-releasing practice before stillness*). Slowly become still. When you are ready, let your eyes close or simply fix your gaze on a non-moving object in front of you, eyes pointed slightly down about a foot in front of you to relax the neck. Notice the muscles of your face. Your neck and shoulders. Arms. Fingers. Upper back. Mid back. Lower back. Seat. Legs. Feet. Toes. Notice your breath. Where is it moving? Is it shallow or deep? It is erratic or smooth? Simply notice, don't judge.

Begin to slowly inhale and exhale deeply through the nose. If you want, place your hands on your belly. Inhale, and fill the belly up with your breath. Feel the belly expand with air like a balloon. Exhale fully, expelling all the air out from the belly through your nose. Repeat this deep belly breathing for about five breaths. This is part one of the three-part-breath. (*Pause for 5 breaths.*)

Now, I invite you to place your hands on your rib cage. Inhale and fill the belly with air. Then when the belly is full, draw in a little more breath and let that air expand into the rib cage causing the ribs to widen apart. On the exhale, let the air go first from the rib cage, letting the ribs slide closer together, and then from the belly. Repeat this deep breathing into the belly and rib cage for about five breaths. This is part two of the three-part-breath. (*Pause for 5 breaths.*)

If you desire, place your hands on your chest, right under the collarbone. This is the area around the heart, which is the location of *Anāhata*, the heart chakra, in yoga. On the next inhale, fill the belly and rib cage up with air. Then sip in just a little more air and let it fill the upper chest, all the way up to the collarbone, causing it to expand and rise. On the exhale, let the breath go first from the upper chest, feeling it sink back down, then from the rib cage, letting the ribs slide closer together. Final-

ly, let the air go from the belly, drawing the navel back towards the spine. Continue at your own pace, eventually coming to let the three parts of the breath happen smoothly without pausing. (*Pause in silence for a few minutes*). Regulate the breath.

Now, if your eyes are closed, slowly allow them to open. If your gaze is lowered, slowly lift the head. (*Pause*). Notice. (*Pause*). Has anything changed? (*Pause*). You may have had powerful feelings or no feelings, or anything in between. There is no one “right” way to experience this practice. Stay with your unique experience. Encourage an attitude of curiosity and respect for whatever your experience is. (*Short pause*).

Place your hands somewhere on your body that brings you a sense of ease and comfort. Let yourself feel the remarkable gift of your body, the awe and wonder of it. Stay with this sense of gratitude for a moment. (*This concludes the inward focus of the practice*).

When you’re ready, let your eyes gently scan the room until you make eye contact with one or more of your peers. Greet them with a nod, or perhaps a smile. Experience this interaction and notice any new emotions and how they appear in your body as you interact with others. Each one of us is having a different experience. Here we are, together, showing up authentically, just as we are, in community.

Stand up and start walking around the room. You have no destination; just walk in the direction that you are being pulled towards and notice how your movements merge with others in the room. (*Pause to allow time for walking*). Now, approach someone and try to keep eye contact. You will be partners for the next part of this activity. Take a minute to settle. Try to maintain silence, or at least maintain a low and soft voice as you settle in.

Next, we will practice active listening. Active listening takes time, practice, and patience. It is a kind of listening that involves all senses. Active listening is when you fully concentrate on what is being said rather than thinking about how you will respond and only passively hearing the speaker’s words. Active listening not only means focusing fully on the speaker but also actively showing verbal and non-verbal signs of listening, like maintaining eye contact, nodding your head, and smiling to encourage them to continue. But the listener just listens; they do not insert

opinions or interrupt the speaker. And the speaker just speaks, allowing the listener to fully witness them.

Each speaker will have 2 minutes to speak. Try to maintain eye contact with your partner and non-verbally choose who will go first. I will chime when the 2 minutes is up, and then we will switch to the other speaker.

Before we begin, I invite you to close your eyes or lower your gaze for a moment. Take a deep breath in and release it.

Complete the sentence, "Some things I appreciate about myself are..." What words naturally follow?

"Some things I appreciate about myself are..." Whenever you're unsure about what to say, repeat the sentence and see what naturally follows.

"Some things I appreciate about myself are..." *(Begin the 2 minutes. Chime, and switch partners. Repeat the instructions. Begin the 2 minutes and chime at the end).*

Make eye contact with your partner and silently express gratitude for their attention and for witnessing you appreciating yourself. We all have so many unique gifts to offer to one another. May you continue to realize your personal talents and capacities and encourage others to appreciate their own. Thank you all for your participation.

APPENDIX II

If appropriate, precede the sitting meditation with trauma-releasing body movements such as yawning, stomping, dancing, sighing, humming, or singing. In other disciplines, practices such as writing, drawing, storytelling, speaking, or listening may be more appropriate.

A trauma-informed practice may simply include the first two parts of the Mettā meditation (i.e., sending goodwill to oneself and to someone who has shown us love and kindness), as extending love and kindness to an enemy may worsen underlying trauma in some individuals (Magee, 2019).

Mettā is a form of Buddhist meditation traditionally translated as “loving kindness” or “friendliness.” During mettā meditation, the participant moves from sending good will to oneself, to people it’s easy to feel good will toward, like family and friends, and then to strangers. Then, without forcing anything, the participant is encouraged to extend wishes for safety, happiness, and peace to more difficult people, and even those considered enemies. Finally, at the ultimate level, the meditator extends good will to all living beings in the universe.

(Ask students to opt-in with a “thumbs up” or other affirmation.) If any part of this exercise produces significant distress, please feel free to stop at any time. I am always available as a support to each of you. Please don’t hesitate to reach out.

Instructions

- First, find a place to sit or lie down quietly and comfortably.
- You can close your eyes or keep them open a little.
- Take a few deep breaths to begin, calming and steadying yourself to the best of your ability.
- Gently and lightly place a hand on your heart or your belly or another part of your body in any way that promotes a feeling of inner safety and that helps to connect you to your courage and compassion.

Yourself - Repeat after me (3 times):

May I be well.

May I be happy.

May I be safe.

Bring to mind someone who has showed you love and kindness. Take a breath and invite them into your mind's eye.

Someone else - Repeat after me (3 times):

May you be well.

May you be happy.

May you be safe.

Bring to mind a dear friend or family member. Take a breath and invite them into your mind's eye.

Dear one - Repeat after me (3 times):

May you be well.

May you be happy.

May you be safe.

Bring to mind a neutral person (a person who you see regularly at work but don't know personally, the cashier at the store you regularly frequent, etc.). Take a breath and invite them into your mind's eye.

Neutral person - Repeat after me (3 times):

May you be well.

May you be happy.

May you be safe.

Bring to mind a difficult person (someone in your own life who is difficult, someone who you don't know personally but whose influence and decisions affect you negatively). Take a breath and invite them into your mind's eye.

Difficult person - Repeat after me (3 times):

May you be well.

May you be happy.

May you be safe.

Let that go. Take 3 clearing breaths.

It takes practice and dedication to feel loving and kind toward those who are perpetrators of violence and oppression, and feeling good will toward them might be difficult. So, please be kind to yourself. Your job is to notice, without judgment, the emotions that are activated during this exercise. Then, when they arise, see if you can persist through feelings of discomfort and unease.

Bring to mind our Earth and all beings living on Earth. Take a breath and invite all of them, the whole world, into your mind's eye.

Repeat after me (3 times)

May all beings be strong and healthy.

May all living beings be peaceful and know true happiness.

May all beings be safe and protected from harm.

Bring your hands to your heart or in prayer position...

*May each and every living being live their lives with more joy
and ease.*

And together may we complete the great journey of awakening.

Thank you for participating. Please go slow and notice the effects of the meditation.

