



A SERVANT-LEADER MEDITATION

—GEORGE SANFACON AND LARRY C. SPEARS

This guided meditation is about opening your heart to all beings—including yourself—and wishing them well. It is an antidote to contracting around the pain and suffering of life, which separates us from others.

The meditation can be read aloud or silently. Most importantly, it needs to be done slowly and in a quiet setting. So be sure to pause in the spaces indicated (...). Beyond that, there is no right way or wrong way to do the practice.

This is an exercise meant to be grounded in peace, acceptance, and nonviolence. You are therefore requested to enter it only as deeply as is comfortable for you. If resistance arises, simply note it and continue the meditation in whatever way you are able.

As you work with this meditation and practice, feel free to modify it and make it your own.

Find a comfortable, sitting position; body relaxed, back erect, eyes closed softly. After settling in for moment, bring your attention to your breath and proceed as follows.

Become aware of your breathing...

Take three complete breaths—breathing in and breathing out...

Next, make time in your life to do this meditation...Set aside your concerns...Tell yourself that when the meditation is over you will take care of whatever needs to be addressed. However, for the next while—beginning right now—you are going to focus exclusively on the meditation.

Now, become aware of your breathing again...Watch and feel the breath moving in and out of your body...Notice your stomach rising and falling...

- Relax...
- Open to a sense of ease and space...



Now, bring to your mind and heart the image of someone that you love, someone who is precious to you. This may be a family member, a friend, a mentor, anyone that you love and hold dearly. Picture that individual standing in front of you.

Looking deeply at the person, see that this one has suffered...Felt pain of the body, mind, and heart...Known illness, loss, and fear...Felt confused, lonely, and afraid...See the ways this dear one has known pain and suffered.

Speaking silently from the heart, acknowledge this one's pain. Addressing them first by name, tell them:

I know you have suffered...You have known pain and loss...You have not been able to protect yourself from what has harmed you...Nor have you been able to hold on to what you have lost...You have known illness, loneliness, and fear...You have felt your heart contracted and closed...Life has not always given you what you would have wished, and you have suffered.

Now send this dear one your loving thoughts and intentions. Speaking again, silently from the heart, offer them the following blessings:

May you be free of pain and suffering.

May you be happy.

May you love and be loved.

May you find the healing that you seek.

May you find peace.

Repeat these blessings again...Slowly...There is no hurry...Allow your heart to connect with this dear one in loving-kindness...Synchronize your breathing, using one in-and-out breath for each blessing.

May you be free of pain and suffering.

May you be happy.

May you love and be loved.

May you find the healing that you seek.

May you find peace.

Continue silently in this way for a while.

(pause)

Now invite your own self into this heart space, entering and coming to stand alongside the one you love.



Because it is sometimes hard to open our hearts to ourselves, it may help to see yourself as a young child or adolescent.

Bring your mind's eye to rest softly upon yourself...Observe that, just like the loved one, *you* have suffered too...You have felt pain of the body, mind, and heart...You have known illness, loss, and fear...You have felt confused, lonely, and afraid...See the myriad ways you have known pain and suffered.

Speaking silently from the heart, acknowledge this pain. Addressing yourself by name first, tell yourself:

I know you have suffered...You have known pain and loss...You have not been able to protect yourself from what has harmed you...Nor have you been able to hold on to what you have lost...You have known illness, loneliness, and fear...You have felt your heart contracted and closed...Life has not always given you what you would have wished, and you have suffered.

Now send yourself loving thoughts and intentions. Speaking silently from the heart, offer yourself the following blessings:

May you be free of pain and suffering.

May you be happy.

May you love and be loved.

May you find the healing that you seek.

May you find peace.

Repeat these blessings again...Slowly...There is no hurry...Allow your heart to connect with yourself in loving-kindness...Synchronize your breathing, using one in-and-out breath for each blessing.

May you be free of pain and suffering.

May you be happy.

May you love and be loved.

May you find the healing that you seek.

May you find peace.

Continue silently in this way for a while.

(pause)

Now bring to mind someone who has been difficult. Someone for whom you do not feel connected. Rather, you feel distant, hurt, or angry.



Perhaps you feel ill will toward this one. Nevertheless, invite him or her into this space. In your mind's eye, see this one joining and standing alongside yourself and your loved one.

Looking deeply, deeper than you have before, see that this one has suffered too...Felt pain of the body, mind and heart...Known illness, loss, and fear...Felt confused, lonely, and afraid...Lost and confused...See the ways this one has known pain and suffered.

Speaking silently from the heart, acknowledge this one's pain. Addressing them first by name, tell them:

I know you have suffered...You have known pain and loss...You have not been able to protect yourself from what has harmed you...Nor have you been able to hold on to what you have lost...You have known illness, loneliness, and fear...You have felt your heart contracted and closed... Life has not always given you what you would have wished, and you have suffered.

Now send this difficult one your loving thoughts and intentions. Speaking silently from the heart, offer them the following blessings:

May you be free of pain and suffering.

May you be happy.

May you love and be loved.

May you find the healing that you seek.

May you find peace.

Repeat these blessings again. Slowly. There is no hurry...Allow your heart to connect with this one in loving-kindness...Synchronize your breathing with the blessings, using one in-and-out breath for each.

May you be free of suffering.

May you be happy.

May you love and be loved.

May you find the healing that you seek.

May you find peace.

Continue silently in this way for a while.

(pause)

Now bring to mind the many people that you have known this lifetime. Invite them all into the space in front of you. In your mind's eye, see them



streaming in from all sides to join and stand around yourself, your loved one, and the difficult one...Take a moment to scan the gathering and to recognize some of the many faces that have inhabited your life—family members...childhood playmates...neighbors...classmates...friends...co-workers...and others.

Looking upon this *Gathering of Familiars*, see that each of them has suffered too...They have felt pain of the body, mind and heart...They have known illness, loss, and fear...Felt confused, lonely, and afraid...See the many ways they have each known pain and suffered.

Speaking silently from the heart, acknowledge this pain. Tell them:

I know you have suffered...You have known pain and loss...You have not been able to protect yourself from what has harmed you...Nor have you have been able to hold on to what you have lost...You have known illness, loneliness, and fear...You have felt your heart contracted and closed...Life has not always given you what you would have wished, and you have suffered.

Now send these people your loving thoughts and intentions. Speaking silently from the heart, offer them the following blessings:

May you be free of pain and suffering.

May you be happy.

May you love and be loved.

May you find the healing that you seek.

May you find peace.

Repeat these blessings again. Slowly. There is no hurry...Allow your heart to connect with this *Gathering of Familiars* in loving kindness...Synchronize your breathing with the blessings, using one in and out breath for each.

May you be free of pain and suffering.

May you be happy.

May you love and be loved.

May you find the healing that you seek.

May you find peace.

Continue silently in this way for a while.

(pause)



Now bring to mind the rest of humanity, as well as *The Others*—the plants and animals that make up the rest of life on earth. Picture these beings coming and joining the gathering from all sides, surrounding yourself and the others already there. See them streaming into the space in front of you—people from Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Americas...two-legged and four-legged animals...the winged ones...aquatic beings from the oceans...creatures from the insect and reptile realms...trees from the Plant Kingdom. Picture them all coming in to surround and join those already there, including the dear one, yourself, the difficult one, and the many people that you have known.

Bring your mind's eye to gaze and rest softly upon this *Gathering of All Beings*...See that pain is part of life, and realize that each being standing before you has felt pain...Imagine some of the ways they have known pain and suffered.

Speaking silently from the heart, acknowledge that pain. Tell them:

I know you have suffered...You have not been able to protect yourself from what has harmed you...Nor have you been able to hold on to what you have lost...Life has not always given you what you would have wished, and you have suffered.

Now send this *Gathering of All Beings* your loving thoughts and intentions. Speaking silently from the heart, offer the following blessing:

May you be free of pain and suffering.

May you be happy.

May you love and be loved.

May you find the healing that you seek.

May you find peace.

Repeat this several times...Allow your heart to connect with this multitude in loving-kindness...Synchronize your breathing with the blessing, using one in-and-out breath each time you recite it.

May you be free of pain and suffering.

May you be happy.

May you love and be loved.

May you find the healing that you seek.

May you find peace.



Continue silently in this way for a while.

(From a work-in-progress: *Holistic Servant-Leadership and You*, George SanFacon and Larry C. Spears, 2013)

Note: This meditation is based in part on the work of Barb Brodsky and Aaron, founding teachers of Deep Spring Center.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

George SanFacon served as director of the housing facilities department at the University of Michigan from 1983 to 2004, where he pioneered implementing a council-of-equals governance model. He has facilitated seminars and workshops on service management, self-directed teams, energy conservation, organization development, and servant-leadership. His writings include *A Conscious Person's Guide to the Workplace* (2008).

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