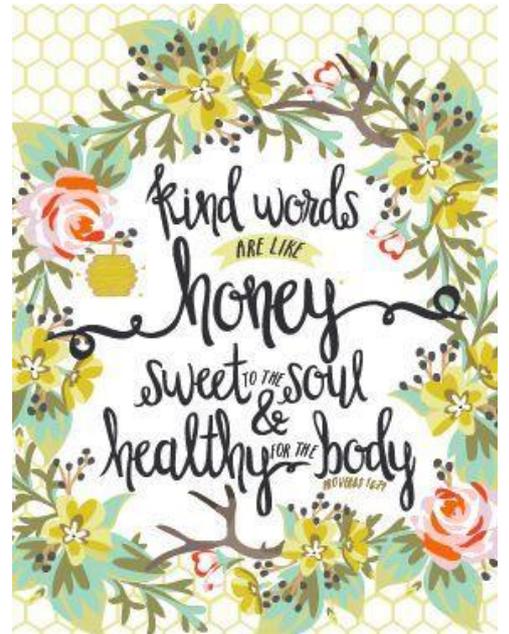


# Mindfulness

## Learning to love ourselves and others

The greatest command is to love yourself as you love your neighbour (Matthew 22:39). It is hard to learn to love yourself! Some people grow up hating themselves, feeling they are no good and believing the negative voice within them. Sometimes we haven't grown up feeling loved, so have to learn to replace negativity with positivity, which is tough.

The ability to love is a learnt thing. Love is expressed in many ways in a healthy family. Right at the heart of family life is love, which involves each member making sacrifices for the others. Families are where we learn how to treat others. Love is the cement of society; it holds us together.



### TRY THIS: CREATING A CIRCLE OF KINDNESS

Offering loving kindness to those we care about can be done as a one off or form part of a longer practice. It can also be done informally in any quiet space where it is possible to sit and reflect undisturbed.

- Sit comfortably, perhaps taking a few moments to tune into the breath and allowing yourself to settle
- Bring to mind someone you care about – a friend, a parent, a sibling, or even a much-loved pet
- Imagine this person or animal and, holding them in your mind's eye, offer them your love and good wishes by silently repeating:

“May you be well,  
May you be happy,  
May you be free from suffering”

(or words to that effect).

- Repeat each phrase slowly and let it resonate, like a pebble falling down a well
- Next imagine yourself standing next to the person or animal, with your hand on their shoulder and repeat silently:

“May we be well,  
May we be happy,  
May we be free from suffering”

You could repeat, adding in people or animals that you care for, each time.

Continue for as long as you wish, and always remember to include yourself.

Notice, too, any thoughts that may arise about the choices you make, monitoring how they resonate in the body, and your emotions. If there is any feeling of tensing or tightening, just notice and acknowledge its presence and remember that you always have a choice of including someone or not.

Are there some things that you need to forgive or ask forgiveness for?

**REMEMBER!** Begin with yourself and those you care about.