**Meditation upon the heart**

Learning to be comfortable with an open heart is of great significance within yoga. For most of us we have learnt to keep the heart closed to keep us safe from hurt so working with the heart can be an interesting and transformative process. Indeed it is often helpful to attune with the heart before any meditation because for many of us we remain in the head rather than operating at the level of the heart where we start to think and act more selflessly (remember the chakras!)

This meditation in slightly different forms has been used by many traditions especially the Buddhist tradition, where it is often known as Metta Meditation. It is very good at helping us to feel connected to the world around us. At first when we work with this type of meditation it may feel inauthentic but persevere and concentrate upon creating feelings rather than thoughts. If working alone it may be we need to alter the words to suit us better personally so if this is the case please do so.

**Heart Meditation**

Sitting comfortably take a few deep breaths relaxing your breath and focusing inwardly…….Now allow yourself to scan the body and if any tight or held places become apparent keep your awareness within them as you gently breathe and release them…let the body be upright and open…….Now concentrate upon the heart space at the centre of the chest, feeling the whole of the centre of the chest beginning to relax deep inside……..

Using your imagination let there be a closed lotus flower at the centre of the chest and as you stay linked with your soft breathing begin to imagine the petals of the lotus flower are slowly opening outwards creating a new spaciousness at the heart…………..now follow the central point of the flower inwards to the centre of your heart and let there be a small flame burning brightly at the centre of your heart….allow your body to be as if transparent with this burning flame lighting up the whole of your inner body……….

Now imagining yourself as a child in your mind’s eye say to your child ‘May you be happy and peaceful’, allowing feelings of love and compassion to flow towards your child, immersing your child in love and compassion…..letting the child into your heart……..

Now imagining yourself as an adult in your mind’s eye say to your adult ‘May you be happy and peaceful’ allowing feelings of love and compassion to flow towards your adult, immersing your child in love and compassion…..letting the adult into your heart……….

Now in your mind’s eye let those you love be before you saying to those you love ‘May you be happy and peaceful’, allowing feelings of love and compassion to flow towards them, immersing them in love and compassion…..letting your loved ones into your heart……….

Now in your mind’s eye let those you find difficult to be with be before you saying to those you find difficult ‘may you be happy and peaceful’, allowing feelings of love and compassion to flow towards them, immersing them in love and compassion……letting them into your heart……..

Now in your mind’s eye let the world be before you saying to the world ‘May all beings be happy and peaceful’, allowing feelings of love and compassion to flow towards the world, immersing it in love and compassion…….letting the whole world enter your heart……..

If you can begin to feel your heart growing larger, becoming more aware of the stillness flling your room and the stillness far beyond this room….simply sitting now held in that lightness of love……..

When you ready to release from the meditation be aware of the small flame located at the heart and see if when you open you eyes and move off into your day you are able to keep an awareness of the small flame sitting at your heart…

**Daily meditation**

There are many ways in which to feel connected with the world in a meaningful way. We can as suggested above try to stay aware of the small flame of the heart, imagining the body to be its aura of light as we perform our usual activities. We can also consciously look for ways in which to help others.

Another excellent way to work with the heart is to imagine you have no head and perform your daily activities as if you are focused within the heart, so even if you look in a mirror to see your face imagine you are looking from your heart. This is very good because most of us are like an enormous head with the body suspended from it; this is particularly the case for those of us who work in sedentary jobs where we must primarily use our intellect.