

## Metta for Caregivers

(from Joan Halifax, *Being with Dying* teachers' manual)

The emphasis in these practices is on balance—the balance between opening one's heart endlessly, and accepting the limits of what one can do. The balance between compassion and equanimity. Compassion is the trembling or the quivering of the heart in response to suffering. Equanimity is a spacious stillness that can accept things as they are. The balance of compassion and equanimity allow us to care, and yet not get overwhelmed and unable to cope because of that caring.

The phrases we use reflect this balance. Choose some phrases that are personally meaningful to you. You can alter them in any way, or use one that you have created out of your unique personal significance.

To begin the practice, take as comfortable a position as possible, sitting or lying down. Take a few deep soft breaths to let your body settle. Bring your attention to your breath, and begin to silently say your chosen phrases in rhythm with the breath...you can also experiment with just having your attention settle in the phrases, without using the anchor of the breath. Feel the meaning of what you are saying, yet without trying to force anything...let the practice carry you along.

*May I offer my care and presence unconditionally, knowing it may be met by gratitude, indifference, anger or anguish.*

*May I find the inner resources to truly be able to give*

*May I offer love, knowing I cannot control the course of life, suffering or death*

*May I remain in peace, and let go of expectations*

*I care about your pain, yet cannot control it*

*I wish you happiness and peace, but I cannot make your choices for you*

*May this experience be a heavenly messenger for me, helping me open to the true nature of life*

*May I see my limits compassionately, just as I view the suffering of others*

*May I, and all beings, live and die in ease*