

Four limitless ones

May all sentient beings enjoy happiness and the root of happiness. (loving-kindness)

May they be free from suffering and the root of suffering. (compassion)

May they not be separated from the great happiness devoid of suffering. (sympathetic joy)

May they dwell in the great equanimity free from passion, aggression, and prejudice. (equanimity)

Sympathetic Joy Practice

The practice of sympathetic joy traditionally uses the third line of the Four Limitless Ones chant, “May they not be separated from the great happiness devoid of suffering.”

This contemplation helps us to overcome jealousy at others’ achievements and good fortune. We can think of others who are very happy and rejoice in their happiness. Start with people you feel love for and expand to those whom you dislike. Imagine that their happiness expands without bounds.

You can also think of someone whose suffering has now ceased and feel joy in that ending of suffering. Again expand from loved one to neutral to enemy. Then include all sentient beings in the world and the galaxies.

Imagine that all beings are bathed in happiness. Generate a feeling of joy for all beings.

Equanimity Practice

The practice of equanimity traditionally uses the fourth line of the Four Limitless Ones chant, “May they dwell in the great equanimity free from passion, aggression, and prejudice.” Many teachers recommend starting with the equanimity practice to lessen fixation on the concept of loved ones vs. enemies. You can try beginning the series of four with the Equanimity Practice and ending with the Sympathetic Joy Practice if you wish.

First think of someone you love now. Then ponder your past and future relationship. Think about the changes in circumstance that cause you to have different feelings toward that person. In the past you may have had no feelings for the person. Now you love them. In the future this might change.

Perform the meditation thinking of someone you dislike greatly. Consider that your enemy might change into your friend in a different circumstance or that he/she might move away and not affect you any longer.

Contemplate the fact that many external factors affect whether someone is a friend, neutral or enemy.

(practices adapted from *Mind at Ease* by Traleg Kyabgon Rinpoche)