Meditations

*Non-meditation*: Find a comfortable place to sit and just be still. Try to maintain for 20 minutes. Allow your mind to wander wherever it wanders. You may want to take note of the thoughts and feelings you experience. No judging! It is impossible to do this (or any) exercise wrong.

*Concentration*: Find something to focus your attention on. You may want to focus on your breath, a candle flame, a sound or some music, or an object within your field of vision. Try to keep your attention on the object you have chosen. Whenever your mind wanders, gently bring your attention back to the object you chose. No judging! When you first practice this your mind will wander constantly. As you practice you will slowly notice that your focus increases. Think of it as exercising a muscle…you will slowly get stronger. Begin with practicing for one or two minutes and slowly increase to five, ten or more minutes.

*Radiating love or light*: Begin with belly breathing. Focus on your heart and imagine that it is glowing with love or light. Slowly watch the light spread from your heart so that it fills your entire chest cavity, then your arms, legs, and head. Once your body is filled with light, imagine the light flowing out from your heart toward someone that you love until it embraces and fills them. Each time you practice this, choose a different person to reach out to in love. As you develop your practice, you may want to start including strangers, other beings, or even enemies. Eventually you may want to include the whole universe!

*Mountain:* Imagine yourself as a mountain. Some thoughts and feelings will be stormy, with thunder, lightning, and strong winds. Some will be like fog or dark, ominous clouds. Inhaling, think “mountain.” Exhaling, think “stable.” Use your breath to focus on the present moment and cultivate the ability to weather the storm. If you find yourself swept up in a thought or emotion, notice it and simply return to the breath. The key is to pay attention to the ever-changing process of thinking rather than to the contents of your thoughts. As you begin to see that they are just thoughts, they will begin to lose their power. You will no longer believe everything you think! You are not your thoughts! Continue to watch and become mindful of your thoughts, feelings, and sensations for 5-20 minutes.

*Do what you’re doing (be one-mindful):* Whatever you are doing, focus on your thoughts, feelings and sensations while doing it. For example, while doing the dishes, notice the feel of the water and the dishes, the smell of the soap, the sounds of the water, etc. Use all of your senses to be in the moment. Do the same while gardening, doing laundry, walking the dog, or any other activity.

*Connection to the Universe*: Focus on one little thing that you appreciate (socks, hot water, music, etc.) and create a link to all of the people and processes that have put in effort for you to have that particular thing. Example: To be looking at my candle I needed a match to light it. Someone invented the match and many other people were involved in creating the match that I used, including the people who transported it to the store and sold it to me. Likewise with the candle. Be as detailed as you can in your thinking about how many people were required to put in effort so you could have what you have.

*Mantras*: Find a thought, statement, or affirmation that you wish to focus on. Repeat the mantra to yourself with each inhale and exhale.

*Lovingkindness*: There are many variations of this classic meditation. The key is to focus on feeling love and compassion for yourself first, and then for others. Spend plenty of time focusing on yourself. When you are ready to move on, first think of someone you care about deeply, then move to a friend, then an acquaintance, then a stranger. Try some of the following meditations, or look for one on-line:

May I feel safe. May I feel peaceful. May I live life with ease.

May I rest in Lovingkindness.

May I accept myself just as I am.