**Brief Breathing Space and Loving-Kindness Meditation (~11 minutes):**

To make the most of this relatively brief combined practice, we want to come into the moment quickly by taking a definite posture. If you are standing, stand up straight, legs shoulder width apart, and push your shoulders back and down. If you are sitting, sit up straight, push your shoulders back and down, and press your feet into the ground with your legs uncrossed. If it is an appropriate setting and you are comfortable with it, then you can gently close your eyes.

The first step is to notice what thoughts are around. There is no reason to try to control, just notice them, particularly noticing any negative thoughts. Perhaps saying to yourself, aaah, that’s just how it is right now. Similarly, notice any negative or powerful emotions that are around, as well as any unwanted or uncomfortable bodily sensations, again not to try to control or eliminate them, just to accept them as they are in this moment… aaaah, that’s just how it is right now…

You have stepped out of autopilot… and now the second step is to turn your attention and awareness to a singular object, and in this case, we are going to use the breath and the related sensations in our belly. See if you can allow your belly to relax and be *soft* and just really tune in to the sensation in your soft belly with each in-breath… increasing pressure and expansion… and with each out breath… decreasing pressure and contraction. There is no need to control the breath in any way, just notice the full length of the in-breath and the full length of the outbreath. Notice when your mind wanders or gets caught up in a thought, emotion, memory or bodily sensation, then gently direct your attention back to the breath at the level of your *soft* belly (pause for ~10 seconds or more).

And now, for a third and final step, see if you can expand your awareness to include not only your breath, but a sense of your body as a *whoooole*… just take a few moments to notice the physical sensations from the hair on top of your head all the way down to your toes… *your body as a whole*…this can be a softer, broader awareness. It *may* even feel as if your *entire body is breathing*… (end of three-minute breathing space)

And now, with a relaxed body and more-quiet mind, notice and feel your energy settle into your body and into the moment…. invite your awareness to accept any phrases that emerge from your heart that express what you wish most deeply for yourself, not just for today, but also in an enduring way… Phrases that are big enough and general enough that you can ultimately wish them for *all of life*.. for all beings everywhere.

Traditional phrases are things like, "May I live in safety. May I be happy. May I be healthy. May I live with ease."

You can gently repeat these phrases over and over again… Invite your mind to rest in the phrases and whenever you find your attention has wandered, notice any worry about it and then see if you can let that be. When you recognize you've lost touch with the moment in this or any other way, see if you can gently let go and begin again.

May I live in safety. May I be happy. May I be healthy. May I live with ease.

Now, call to mind somebody that you care about, a good friend, or someone who's helped you in your life, someone who inspires you. Say their name to yourself and allow yourself to visualize them. Get a feeling for their presence, and then direct the phrases of loving kindness to them.

May *you* live in safety. May you be happy. May you be healthy. May you live with ease. (May repeat 1 or 2 times)

Now call to mind someone you know, who's having a difficult time right now. They may be multiple people, that change while you are *practicing*. They've experienced a loss, painful feeling, and a difficult situation. They may have acted in a way that you find unhelpful. If somebody like that comes to mind, bring them here. Imagine them sitting in front of you. Say their name. Get a feeling for their presence and offer the phrases of loving kindness to them.

May *you* live in safety. May you be happy. May you be healthy. May you live with ease. (May repeat 1 or 2 times)

Now, think of someone who plays some role in your life, some function that you don't know very well, that you don't have a particular feeling for, or against. Maybe a staff person that you recognize but don’t know very well, the checkout person at the supermarket where you shop, somebody that you see periodically. If someone like that comes to mind, imagine them sitting in front of you, and offer these same phrases of loving kindness to them.

May *you* live in safety. May you be happy. May you be healthy. May you live with ease. (May repeat 1 or 2 times)

When we connect into these phrases, aiming the heart in this way, we're opening ourselves to the possibility of including, rather than excluding, of connecting, rather than overlooking, of caring, rather than being indifferent. And ultimately, we open in this way to all beings everywhere, without distinction, without separation.

May all beings live in safety. May all beings be happy. May all beings be healthy. May all beings live with ease.

All people, all animals, all creatures, all those in existence, near and far, known to us and unknown to us, all beings on the earth, in the air, in the water, those being born, those dying,

May all beings everywhere live in safety. May all beings everywhere be happy. May all beings everywhere be healthy. May all beings everywhere live with ease.

You feel the energy of this aspiration extending infinitely in front of you, to either side, behind you, above and below. As the heart extends in a boundless way, leaving no one out, may all beings live in safety, be happy, be healthy, and live with ease.

And… when you feel ready…only when you are ready, slowly and gently bring yourself back into the space, into the room where you are sitting or lying down… feel your body, however it is positioned, wiggle your fingers and your toes and then allow your eyes to open, and see if you can bring this energy with you throughout the rest of your day.