

The Stations of Brahma

Personal and Spiritual Growth Challenge

Part 1 - Maitri (Friendliness, Loving-kindness)

First, some context and the big idea...

The "stations of Brahma" are friendliness, compassion, gladness, equanimity and joy. I learned about the term from Michael Gadway, senior minister at Center for Spiritual Awareness. He wrote about them in his book on the first *pada* (chapter) of the Yoga Sutras - *The Nirodha Yoga of Patanjali: The Transformation of Consciousness*. Michael suggests focusing on each one for three months. I'm inviting you to join me as I explore this practice.

Here is Sutra 1.33 in Sanskrit, then English, then some commentary, copied from Michael's book...

[Sanskrit]: "Maitri-karuna-mudita-upeksanam sukha-dukha-punya-apunya-visayanam bhavanatas citta prasadanam"

[English]: Clarify the consciousness and pacify the mind under both auspicious and inauspicious conditions by cultivating friendliness, compassion, gladness, equanimity and joyfulness.

[Excerpt from Commentary]: To behave righteously with calm dignity, regardless of the circumstances we are under, clarifies and strengthens the mind making us fit conduits for spirit. We train ourselves to remain inwardly peaceful no matter what is occurring in the world around us.

This not only cleanses the mind; it also helps prepare the mind for more profound meditation experiences which require refined levels of consciousness and focus."

The point of this challenge is to train ourselves to be self-aware (mindful) about our actions toward self and others, and to cultivate Self-awareness of our true essence as spiritual beings. You could think of it as taking "yoga off the mat," or "meditation off the cushion," in that we expand our spiritual practice to our all-day, everyday actions, interactions, thoughts, feelings, and self-talk.

After over twenty years as a yoga practitioner and teacher, I have realized that I need to work on some foundational practices. The stations of Brahma have historically been used to help us surrender our egos and our sense of independent self-hood, which make us think we are separate from others and separate from God.

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Questions? Contact Joan Craig at joan@choosejoyfulhealth.com or (864) 561-5925.

The first practice is **Friendly Loving-Kindness**. We will focus on cultivating friendliness and an attitude of loving-kindness in our lives for three months.

I will be sharing from my perspective as a Kriya yoga disciple and my own process of surrender. [You can learn more about that from this series of blog posts](#) (Parts 1-3). All cultures, faiths, and perspectives are welcome. The point of this challenge is to be a better person and teach our minds to behave!

“Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom.” - Viktor Frankl, *Man’s Search for Meaning*

My personal goal is to explore all five virtues over 15 months, but let’s just take it one day at a time!

What will we do?

We will focus on friendly loving-kindness for Sept-Oct-Nov. We will begin by examining the definitions, how we can practice it, and what gets in our way (obstacles). Then each person can define their desired behaviors and goals to practice on a daily and weekly basis. I have provided some “food for thought” at the end of this document to get us started.

I invite you to a monthly Zoom meeting (or possibly in person for upstate SC) to share our findings and have group support. If it flows, some may want an accountability partner, so that is a potential outcome. See end of document for dates and times.

I suggest that you journal or find another way to reflect on your feelings and experiences.

These virtues do not exist in a vacuum. The Yoga Sutras describe many lifestyle habits and meditation techniques to practice along with and in addition to these. My hope is that the challenge will aid us in our other spiritual practices: meditation, prayer, solitude, silence, reading spiritual literature, and others.

You’re welcome to join [weekly meditation with me at 7 am ET](#).

Participate in meditation and classes with [Center for Spiritual Awareness](#).

Use an app like Insight Timer, YouTube, Spotify, or others. (You might explore loving-kindness or metta meditations)

Just sit in the silence!

Please note: the purpose of the challenge is not to socialize excessively. Roy often advised us to avoid excessive talking and socializing. I enjoy having community, friendship, support, and encouragement, but the point of the friendliness challenge is not to pack your calendar with seeing friends to the point of feeling depleted.

What's my role?

I am offering this challenge because I want and need to do it. The best way for me to learn is to commit to others that I will organize my thoughts and share them. Your interest in participating nudges me towards what is good for me. I do not see myself as the teacher, because I will be exploring this with a beginner's mind, but more as a coach or possibly a cheerleader for us all to be successful.

There is no fee, no pressure, no deadlines, and no stress. You can do absolutely nothing and just receive the emails. You can participate a little or a lot. If you feel the challenge is of value, and you want to support work like this, you can make a contribution to [Center for Spiritual Awareness through their website](#).

Friendly Loving-Kindness Challenge - Get Started

Suggestions below to get started. Proceed in your own way and explore Friendly Loving-Kindness.

- Research the words *maitri* and *metta*
- Research Yoga Sutra 1.33 (sometimes written 1:33 or Pada 1 Sutra 33)
 - What do these terms mean to you?
 - From what you learned, how do you think practicing these virtues might help you? What benefits would you experience? What do you want to apply?
- Do you have a role model who embodies the virtue? What are their behaviors that you admire?
- What self-care do you need to support you in friendliness?
- What obstacles get in your way, and how might you overcome them?
- When is it easy for you to practice friendliness and loving-kindness?
- When is it challenging?
- When you feel ready, write down a few key actions or behaviors that you want to implement to practice this virtue.
- What does friendliness look like on a daily, weekly, and monthly basis?

Friendly Loving-Kindness Challenge - Community Support & Sharing

Zoom meetings - Sundays, 5:00-6:00 pm ET

September 18, October 23, November 13

[Click here to sign up for email reminders that include the Zoom link.](#)

If you can't come to the meeting, you are welcome to send me your thoughts anytime. If you want to meet in person at those dates and times, please let me know. I can accommodate a small group at home. If you have a meeting place in mind, please reach out!

joan@choosejoyfulhealth.com 864-561-5925 (I can respond easier and more quickly to texts.)

ZOOM MEETING INFO

Joan Craig is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Topic: Joan Craig's Personal Meeting Room

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/9342511744?pwd=WGtOYVZ2ZVJEcEFCZkg2dW9WeVpUUT09>

Meeting ID: 934 251 1744

Passcode: 5615925

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