# A picture of a heart.

# Experiment

There was an experiment in Washington DC some years ago in which a group of people decided to practice mental focus for several weeks to affect the crime rates. Before the experiment was started, the group notified the officials and told them of their hope that the crime rate would drop. The officials said that nothing short of a severe snow storm in the middle of winter would reduce the crime rate. After six weeks of up to 4,000 practicing kindness of their thoughts (in the middle of summer), the crime rate had dropped by nearly 25 percent (Hagelin, et al 1993). This story is an example of thoughts effecting people in a significant and positive way.

# Heartfulness

Most of the time, our mind is having thoughts that we are not even aware of. This is a practice on heartfulness, purposely having kind thoughts, or wishing happiness for yourself or others.

Close your eyes. Sit comfortably with your feet flat on the floor and your spine straight. Relax your whole body. Keep your eyes closed throughout the whole visualization and bring your awareness inward. Without straining or concentrating, just relax and gently follow the instructions.

Take a deep breath in. And a deep breath out.

Bring someone to mind who you see every day and whom you like, or care about or really love. It may be someone you live with, or someone at school, or a teacher, or maybe a pet. Bring this person or animal to mind. See if you can imagine or feel the person or animal doing things that make you smile. As you imagine this person or animal, pay attention to what you are feeling in your heart. Sometimes this can be challenging. If you are finding it challenging, do not worry. You can keep trying and notice if it gets easier.

Let your eyes close. Imagine your person doing something that makes them very happy. We are going to send kind wishes to our person. I will say each wish out loud, and you can repeat the wishes silently in your mind. Continue each wish until you hear the next one.

Let us begin. (Pause for several moments between each wish)

I wish for you to be happy.

I wish for you to be healthy.

I wish for you to be peaceful.

I wish for you to have joy in your life.

Imagine the person can feel your wishes. This may or may not be true, but you can imagine it. Imagine your wishes are like texts able to reach your person instantly. They begin to get happier and happier. Also, notice your own heart and what you are feeling. (Give 15 seconds or more for silence.)

Gently let the image of the person drop away. Bring your attention to one complete breath. Then let your eyes open.

# Sending Loving-Kindness to Neutral People

Now think of an acquaintance, someone you do not know very well and toward whom you do not have any particular feeling. You and this person are alike in your wish to have a good life.

Send all your wishes for well-being to that person, repeating the following phrases, silently:

Just as I wish to, may you also be happy.

Just as I wish to, may you also be healthy.

Just as I wish to, may you also be peaceful.

Just as I wish to, may you also have joy in your life.

# Sending Loving-Kindness to All Living Beings

Now expand your awareness and picture the whole globe in front of you as a little ball.

Send warm wishes to all living beings on the globe, who, like you, want to be happy:

Just as I wish to, may you also be happy.

Just as I wish to, may you also be healthy.

Just as I wish to, may you also be peaceful.

Just as I wish to, may you also have joy in your life.

Take a deep breath in. And breathe out. And another deep breath in and let it go. Notice the state of your mind and how you feel after this meditation.

When you are ready, you may open your eyes.

## Reflections

1. Who did you send good wishes to?
2. Does it feel awkward or uncomfortable to have kind and caring thoughts?
3. How do you feel now?