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### OBJECTIVE //

- To widen the circle of people and beings for whom we have authentic concern and encourage connection with people a world away

**TIME //** 10-20 minutes

**GROUP SIZE //** Any

**MATERIALS //** None

**PREPARATION //** Review instructions and modify prompts as desired

### ACTIVITY GUIDE

We often experience our thoughts and feelings as independent and separated from everyone and everything else. This compassion-based guided visualization counteracts our tendency to categorize others as different, helping us gradually widen the circle of people and beings for whom we have true, caring concern, including people a world away.

The prompts below are there to encourage connection between the participant and an imagined Other. Be flexible with the prompts - change the language to suit your needs and preferences, and take out what doesn't feel authentic for you and your group.

Visualizations are like prayers that use the imagination and prompts to guide participants. They are different than the practice of Christian meditation, in which the mantra "Come Lord Jesus" (ma-ra-na-tha) is repeated silently by participants over a set time period. To learn about Christian meditation, please visit the Canadian Christian Meditation Community website.

### LEADING A GUIDED VISUALISATION EXERCISE //

When leading others through a visualization, try to do the practice yourself at the same time. It is fine to refer to the prompts, but you should never just talk or read the 'script.' The information below was adapted from Dr. Greg Serpa and Christiane Wolf's "How to Lead a Meditation Practice" articles.

*Newer facilitators tend to believe that in order to 'get it right' they have to use the exact words from the transcript. But it isn't about the words. It's about the authentic moment-by-moment unfolding. When you lead from your own experience and genuine place, everyone can sense this. In the pauses between your sentences or cues, really connect with your*

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*body, your breath. Feel it. Then say the next sentence. Then feel back into your body, your own present-moment experience. Practice this back and forth until it feels natural (and not like a back and forth anymore).*

*Speak with your normal tone of voice and volume so people can hear you across the room. Make sure your voice has a normal intonation and doesn't become monotonous. Be aware that your voice might get softer when leading a class through a guided meditation.*

It is important to leave plenty of room between cues (10-40 seconds) to allow participants enough spaciousness to do what you've prompted them to do. Counting two to eight breaths (or more) between cues will help you both connect with your own practice and vary the pause lengths. Stagger your cues and spacing to match the needs and abilities of your particular group.

Remember: each time you deliver a prompt, your participants will need time to hear the words you say; repeat them in their minds; recall a series of emotions, memories or thoughts; reflect on these; experience compassion for themselves; and extend compassion for the 'other'. Prompts marked with a star (\*) will benefit from an extra long pause.

### NOTES //

- If you have never led a guided visualization, you may wish to practice this with a friend or family member prior to leading it with your group.
- If you have never participated in a guided visualization, you may also find it helpful to listen to one on your electronic device to get a sense of its flow and style.
- For some groups, having a soft meditation track playing in the background may help participants focus. In other groups, meditation music may be distracting. Use your best judgement when deciding on whether to incorporate music.

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### PROMPTS //

*Announce to group that they will be moving into the guided visualization/meditation*

*If participants have been sitting on chairs for a while, or seem physically uncomfortable or fidgety, acknowledge these facts, and invite anyone who needs to move to find a spot on the floor – allowing 1 minute for this*

Now I'd like to invite you to find a posture of dignity and ease...

*Settle into comfortable position to model posture*

**Sitting up with a straight back... placing hands either on the thighs or folding them in the lap... Tucking in your chin slightly... If you're sitting in a chair, planting feet firmly on the ground...**

**If it feels right in this moment, allowing the eyes to close...**

Or softly gazing downwards, finding a place to look... gazing on your cheeks or at the floor in front of you.

**Take a moment to just try and feel connected to the people in your life who have touched you in a kind and positive way... \***

And also feeling connected to all the people whose lives you touch... through your kindness and through your love...\*

Feeling connected to all of that...

**Now bringing to mind now a person from far away... perhaps this person is not the most easy for you to identify with, or feel close to, maybe its someone you've never thought about before...**

It could be the farm worker who harvested the bananas in your kitchen...  
the Bangladeshi garment worker who made your t-shirt...  
or a refugee you saw in the news...\*

**Perhaps someone who has been forced to abandon their land due to a natural disaster... or oil contamination ...perhaps someone who has been forced to flee their homes due to war ...or religious or ethnic persecution...\***

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And trying to imagine them in some detail...

What does their face look like? ...What are their eyes like?

Imagining that this person is sitting or standing in front of you...  
Another human being, just like you...

Now silently repeat these phrases, while looking at this person:

- This person has a body and a mind, just like me...
- This person has feelings, emotions and thoughts, just like me...
  
- This person has in his or her life, experienced physical and emotional pain and suffering, just like me...\*
- This person has at some point been sad, disappointed, angry, or hurt, just like me...\*
- This person has felt unworthy or inadequate, just like me...\*
- This person worries and is frightened sometimes, just like me...\*
  
- This person has longed for friendship, just like me...\*
- This person is learning about life, just like me...
- This person wants to be caring and kind to others, just like me...
- This person wants to be content with what life has given, just like me...
- This person wishes to be free from pain and suffering, just like me...
  
- This person wishes to be safe and healthy, just like me...
- This person was once a cute little baby - just like me...
  
- This person wishes to be happy, just like me...
- This person wishes to be loved, just like me...

Now, allow some prayers for well-being to arise:

- I pray that this person have the strength, resources, and social support to navigate the difficulties in life with ease...

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- I pray that this person be free from pain and suffering...
- I pray that this person be peaceful and happy...
- I pray that this person be loved...

Because this person is a fellow human being, just like me...

**Now as we move towards the end of this experience, take a moment to notice how you are feeling...** There could be some anxiety or restlessness... Or sadness... Or joy... Questions, indifference, anger, a neutral feeling... Whatever it is – there's no specific emotion that we're looking for here...

**If there was a particular statement that felt interesting to explore, please feel free to bring that one to mind again...**

Now if you like, take a moment to thank the person (you've practiced with) in whatever way feels appropriate...\*

**If it feels right in this moment, bringing attention to the feeling of the hands... and the legs and the feeling of contact with what you're sitting on.**

**Bringing attention to the breath...**

Noticing any sensation that you might feel in the nostrils... or chest... as you inhale... and exhale...

If your eyes were closed, slowly allowing them to gently and open slightly.

Now bringing a wider awareness now to any sounds in the room .... the objects in it ... the light

Thank you.

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### CONCLUSION //

Invite participants to remember this visualization exercise and continue to use it in their daily lives; it can be done for any amount of time, from a few seconds to hours, whether sitting on a cushion in silence, waiting in line, traveling on transit or walking down the street.

Time permitting, you may wish to conclude with a prayer or by inviting your participants to do a pair-share about their experience. Alternatively, consider providing participants with additional space and time for quiet contemplation, especially if they are returning from a space of deep inner reflection.