So the practice of loving kindness is called in Pali which is the ancient Buddhist language, metta, and metta is a cognate, with a word for friend, which is metta, and the idea of methods a kind of friendly attitude towards ourselves or towards other people. And it's very strongly associated with Buddhism, especially the Buddhism that we kind of belong to the Theravada tradition, Southeast Asia, where loving kindness is considered to be kind of the foundational positive virtue that Buddhists in Thailand and Burma and Sri Lanka will be developing will develop. The mindfulness practice is the practice of seeing clearly what's actually here. Learning how to be present for things as they are without reacting against them or pushing way of holding on just being present in a simple direct way for how things are. loving kindness is different than that, because it's actually generating a sense of goodwill, or using goodwill as the reference for how our interpersonal relationships should be in relationship to ourselves. Often when we go about our life, we have to make decisions about how to act and what to do. Mindfulness helps us to see very clearly what the situation is what our reactions or feelings or thoughts or values that go into it. And loving kindness is one of the things that Buddhists use to help them guide them. Where the what is it what the decision should be. Is this a kind thing that I'm going to do now? You know, is it are you doing are you doing something kind or do you do something which is unkind this moment? Wouldn't you rather be doing something that's kind Buddhist already? cultivate the sense of metta or metta, friendliness or kindness, not artificially, not as a cover or as a suppression of other feelings we might have. There's always the recognition that we might not feel kind towards people or towards ourself. And it's not supposed to be pushing or repressing those feelings, but rather, recognizing the unkindness that might be there the anger, the hostility, or the sadness, or whatever it might be there. And even with that they're seeing if we can find in some core court some corner are some core essence of who we are, that it would be nice to wish well for this person you want this person's well being you want your own well being. In Theravada Buddhism metta is the foundational virtue and on the cultivation of loving kindness, the other four primary virtues Have the tradition follow. So the other primary virtues are compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity. Compassion is the wishing. Why should someone not suffer? sympathetic joy is sharing empathetically in the happiness
someone else is experiencing. So both of them both have to do with empathy. Compassion is empathizing with the suffering of someone. And sympathetic joy is empathizing with their happiness. And those are qualities that arise out of loving kindness you can, if you feel kindly towards people, then you're likely to feel these other emotions. The four brahma vihara, as they're called the four, loving kindness, sympathetic joy, compassion equanimity are called brahma vihara. Brahma is a great God Indian pantheon of gods he's kind of like the ruler of gods. In ancient India, they believe there's like the ancient Greeks. There was, you know many gods and then Zeus in the Greek Pantheon. Well, in ancient India, Brahma was the equivalent of Zeus and vihara means a dwelling place. So these four virtues are called the four brahma vihara says that some people will translate English into English as the four divine abodes from a being the highest God, that highest divinity, that for divine abodes when we're at our best when the best qualities within us come to the foreground, then it's kind of a divine kind of qualities that come through love, kindness, compassion.

And vihara means it's a place to dwell. It's a place to hang out. It's a place where we can kind of operate from when we go about our life. The four brahma vihara. czar also called the four immeasurables or the four qualities before boundless states and that they're not supposed to have any boundaries to them. When they're really fully, you know, initially you might first have some kindness or love towards yourself and then towards other people. But as meditators develop this quality, Buddhist spiritual life, they develop it so that these qualities of loving kindness and compassion become boundless are immeasurable, where they don't even have to be directed to any particular person. They just boundless states of our heart is just completely open and boundless has no limit to how, what the hearts will include within it in a loving, kind, friendly way. And it's really remarkable to go to, for example, Southeast Asia, and to meet some of the especially the monks and nuns, who have spent maybe 30 4050 years every day, practicing loving kindness Meditation and maybe not only in meditation but also in your daily life. They keep loving kindness practice going as they go through their life. And it's maybe there's some some people as the primary spiritual practices they've engaged in for all these years. And these people use they're beaming. You know, they're kind of you get into their field. It's like you're in this field of loving kindness is just like a remarkable thing to feel.

When I was first introduced to loving kindness practice, it was a Buddhist practice. I mistrusted it. I thought it was kind of artificial thing. How could someone kind of do a practice that kind of generates or, you know, makes happen, feelings or attitudes of kindness or love or friendliness, those things just kind of happened spontaneously. You don't want to manufacture them or call them forth because it's kind of artificial. So in my early training, when the teacher would guide us in loving kindness, Meditation, I would always tune the teacher out. I'm not going to do that part, but I'm not gonna do that I just continue with my mindfulness practice. And then the remarkable thing happened was that mindfulness itself as it develops and matures, softens tenderizes the heart so that the natural goodness, the natural friendliness, kindness of the heart begins shining on its own. And then when the teachers lead the loving kindness meditation, I was right there with them because all this kindness was bubbling up through my own heart, the old crusts of fear and stuff had dissolved. And then I got really into, it was really great. Some people will take to the loving kindness practice right away, and
some people will be like me saying, There's no way you know, this is dumb. And I don't know how it was for you to do it. But both attitudes are allowed. It's fine to have both ways. I'm very fond of the fact that The scholars of Buddhism, studied ancient early Buddhism. And they studied this, this these four practices of the Brahma vihara. As they point out that these weren't originally not Buddhist practices, during the modern world, often associated with Buddhism, they seem to have been spiritual practices that were just part of the spiritual scene of ancient India, as were many some of the teachings of the Buddha, were not unique to the Buddha, he just adopted things that made sense to him from the spiritual traditions around him. And those traditions have long since died away. And so people associate these things with the Buddha and Buddhism because that's where they survived. The brahma vihara czar like that they were a part of kind of the general Indian spiritual millia that at the time of the Buddha, and I like this a lot, because what it means is that it doesn't they don't belong to a particular religion, something like a Buddhist religious thing, you know, you have to be a Buddhist to do it or something. I like to think of it they're just universal qualities that we We all have, we all have the capacity for kindness for love. We all have the capacity for compassion, empathy, and that it's important to develop that capacity we have, and we don't have to leave it to chance that these things will just arise by accident. You know, we can kind of pray at night, you know, please You know, tomorrow Can I have some compassion or some kindness or something and we can actually do something to cultivate that and develop it. And one of the principles of Buddhist spirituality is that our intentions are like seeds. And if you act or express, any kind of intention, that seed will flower will develop will grow into a wonderful plant. If your intentions are mostly intentions of ill will, of aggression, of self loathing. Then what you're actually doing is watering that seed of self loathing and aggression, whatever it is, and it becomes more like a habit and we're likely to do more in the future. If we cultivate And water the seeds of kindness of love, then you're more likely to have those develop and mature in your life. If you leave it to accident, then you know has to do with the you know the other oddities of daily life that maybe you feel loving one day or maybe not, you know, you don't know. But you can actually, intentionally or consciously choose to work on this intention. You can't make yourself feel loving, but you can water the seeds of the desire to be kind desire of goodwill. And what's remarkable is that person's might do this in their own meditation practice every day, maybe 10 minutes each day of their meditation practice, some people will make it the primary meditation practice is it as it has, it becomes more part of yourself regular part and work more close at hand more accessible more when you're familiar with and something pops up at it the usual times. You find your yourself in a situation normally you would have been really angry that person. But because you kind of made it a regular practice of practicing kindness in your meditation, the attitude of looking at this person kindly or wanting to is right there close at hand, and you find yourself remarkably, looking at this person in a new way. Rather than looking at the person with the colored glasses of aggression or anger or hurt, you look at the person to the color glasses of wanting that person's well being or seeing that person's capacity for happiness. One of the images, images or analogies or whatever, for loving kindness practice is the kind of care or tenderness or caregiving or love that a parent has for their child. The traditional way of saying it is his way the way the mother feels for her only child. So kind of a parental feeling. There's not meant only for your
children, it's meant for yourself and for all other beings. And so I like when I do loving kindness practice for other for other people sometimes I like to imagine even if some if someone I don't like for someone I have trouble with or tension with, I think about them. And I think, how are they seen by their mother, when they were one year older? A baby, how their mother treat them, you know, when they were one week old? How did the mother see them and hold them and what kind of wishes of the mother have for that person? And, you know, what are the mother see in that child? And sometimes for me, at least, that kind of changes the filter by which I look at a person from the hurt or the anger or the fear that I might have. And I see that person has a capacity for happiness or joy for tenderness that sometimes will transform our relationship to that person. Something to see that person if that person was was operating from Core tenderness within them. I don't think the person would be doing what they're doing right now. And seeing that person has a capacity for that kind of tenderness. I don't think nor deny or condone what they've done if they've hurt me or something, but I'm more likely to kind of come back to them in a kinder way, in my dealings with that person, rather than coming back automatically and aggressively or something like that. So the regular practice of loving kindness predisposes us to begin looking at the world through the eyes of kindness. And kindness is something that our world sorely needs. And what a lot of Buddhist teachers have pointed out, they've come to America, both Asian teachers and also American teachers, is that as a generalization, Americans need a lot more kindness, especially towards themselves, then Asian practitioners, there seems to level of self loadings lost self esteem self deprecation self doubt, in our culture is kind of has reached epidemic levels. And so much so that I wonder if it isn't contagious. And, and some of them Asian teachers coming to America, I'm just blown away by what they find out here. And then the practice of loving kindness sometimes is really the best practice for someone to start with when they do Buddhist practice. For some people, the practice of mindfulness can actually make people worse. Oddly enough, if person is very self conscious, in all, they tend to look at themselves, their faults and their problems and, you know, they don't even know you'd have to have if certain people in the West don't even have to have a fault to fundamentally believe their fault. Like Original Sin, right? Original fault and so if you have that kind of tend to See, the practice of mindfulness which makes brings on a kind of self sort of introspection? Well, sometimes, oddly enough fuel, the tendency to be self conscious self deprecating self loathing, self, whatever it's like it gives you more material to more proof that how bad you are. Someone once said, self knowledge is seldom good. So for some people, mindfulness practice is not the best place to start. And rather, the best, best place to start is with loving kindness, practice. And everyday me for half an hour or so every day and your morning meditation, just do loving kindness. Initially, maybe do a test to yourself, just yourself a whole half hour for weeks on end. Because some people are already so hard on themselves. Sometimes it doesn't work very well. To do it to yourself, the Buddha took it for granted. It was easy for me To start with themselves, he hadn't wasn't teaching in America. So some people will then not start with themselves. But we'll start with other people. So a caregiver or someone who's cared about you. And sometimes it's a lot easier to have intentions of goodwill toward someone who's been kind towards you. And then after that, you switch. And then maybe it's easier to do towards yourself. So you know, the traditional ways to start with yourself.
It's not meant to be ego egotistical. It's meant to be actually very healthy. It's very, very healthy, to develop a sense of goodwill towards yourself. Some people will say you cannot have real love for other people, unless there is some kind of love towards yourself. If you really want to be of service to others. You need to start towards yourself. And then you expand the practice out to include those People who are your benefactors people care about you. And then you expand the practice out. They bring to mind those people who are neutral in your life. You don't have any particular feeling of, for against like or not like. Now sometimes some people find it's very hard to think of such person. Because as soon as you think of someone, you immediately have a like or dislike, but it's meant to be like the mail carrier, or someone you hardly know at all. It's not a charge thing, sometimes more or less neutral. And after you've done that, it's kind of stabilize yourself when those three categories of people self, benefactor, a neutral person. Then the challenge becomes to expand the sense of goodwill to include people who the traditional word is enemy. In the West, we don't like to use Word enemy. So we use the difficult person but the Buddhist word is the enemy and And that just throws people for a loop, right? You know, my enemy, you know, the person who's caused me the most harm, I'm supposed to have kindness towards them and goodwill to them. And, and it seems impossible, you know, why should I and that person doesn't deserve it that jerk. And everyone deserves the intention of kindness of wanting their well being. And so it becomes a little stretch then and sometimes you have to do some reflection. Work on that and understand what it means to have kindness towards someone and maybe develop some wisdom around it. That doesn't mean you condone what they've done. It doesn't mean you become foolish around them or lower your defenses, maybe if they're still tending to harm you. But it means at least you don't lock them out of your heart out of your heart. Then the practice becomes more expensive. Then you're supposed to what's called break down the barriers. And this means that once you've done those four categories, then you want to imagine all four people standing in front of you. You want to direct the same level of goodwill to all four. So there's no barrier isn't like you're more loving towards a benefactor. And you know, you've done pretty well with the enemy. But, you know, it's kind of like it's, you know, a few notches below the benefactor. You want to lower the barriers, it's equal to everyone. And then your meditation teacher will go and test you. And probably shouldn't tell you the test and the answer. But the test is if you find yourself with yourself, a benefactor, a neutral person and an enemy and some horrible bandit comes along and tells you Okay, you got to choose one of those four people, and I'm going to kill them. Which one would you choose? Bennett? So you have to choose which one you're gonna choose and choose your enemy, the neutral person, your benefactor or yourself? The answer, which I shouldn't tell you is you're not supposed to, you no longer have any criteria by which to decide who should go first. And then you can when the barriers are lowered entirely, you would just throw up your hand and say, I can't decide. So it's not a very satisfying test. It just happens to be one that's used. So after that, then it's a very, it's a very involved meditation. And people usually do when it gets medicinal involved, people will do it on retreats, where people are meditating all day long for maybe sometimes days and weeks on end, just about all they're doing is developing this loving kindness. So you need to vary a little bit to make it interesting, right? And so then, after those four people together, then you begin doing different categories of being. You think of all women, may they be happy, all men, may they be happy, all children, all animals. You kind of cover all these categories of beings. And then you think of all beings in the, in the West and all
beings in the east and up and down all directions, you kind of, it kind of expands the heart or the mind kind of makes it much more spacious. It becomes more boundless, you kind of become more inclusive and sense of inclusivity goes way beyond you. So almost like you become much bigger than you are your consciousness kind of becomes so expensive includes everything around you.

Some people will expand to include first two people in the room where they're sitting and they all these people were sitting in this room, may they be happy. May all the beings in Palo Alto be happy. May everyone in California be happy United States in the world. And the idea if you're doing this well and you're concentrated and very stable, the mind becomes very, very expensive, almost as if you're holding everything within the mind, the mind is just infinitely large and can handle and hold everything within it. Until finally He comes boundless and there's no directions, no boundary, no limit to the love. infinite love, infinite kindness, kind of a huge bubble than encompasses the whole universe. And it's a lovely state to be sitting in.

For most of us, we don't take meditation that far. But it's a very even to practice a little bit is very significant. To practice it in different circumstances in our lives. I love doing it to the airports. Love maybe it's like not quite the right word, because it's not always pleasant to do in the airports. But I like doing airports and what I do is I sit and watch the people walking by and you don't get a very high percentage of smilers in an airport. And so you get kind of a lot of people kind of look kind of grumpy or serious and I imagine them I can look at the person walking by. And I imagine them this thing I told you earlier, like, what they were like, when when you know, maybe as a child with their mother or their father, you know, the best of all certain family circumstances. Or I'm looking look at their face and imagine what that face would look like. It was really happy. So do a little imagination. And then when I can catch that little kind of imaginary face of happiness, then I kind of just without them knowing, of course, I know you'd be happy, maybe well, it's much better way of spending my time at the airport than looking at a television screen up there. I know from the ceiling, you know, or pacing or being impatient or whatever else might go on.

loving kindness practice is often offered As an antidote to anger is not meant to eradicate the anger or didn't deny the anger or avoid it. But it's meant to kind of be a tenderizer. So when anger arises, the anger doesn't have the upper hand. You know, it's kind of being led around by the nose of the anger, but the anger can be there. But you bring loving kindness to yourself, as a way of kind of balancing it so you can maybe begin seeing the situation through the eyes of kindness more, to see the anger is not in charge. Especially when the anger is really overwhelming. And obviously in charge, practicing loving kindness for a while as a way of kind of cooling out. And sometimes you do loving kindness directly to the anger, again, not as an aggression, not as an aggressive act towards the anger to get rid of it. But just hold the anger in a friendly way. May this anger be safe, may it be happy, maybe well, whatever works for you. You know, often anger is really a expression of fear. And if that's the case, fear often just wants to be reassured and wants to be kind of received some kindness. And you can do it to yourself.
So what was it like for some of you to do that half an hour loving kindness practice?

Anyway, reaction to is allowable? Yes, almost a scary experience scary. Because as I started feeling my heart and trying to have loving kindness, suggestions that you're going through, I felt something hard smiles. Yes. This is one of the functions of loving kindness practices to reveal that. And in Buddhism, it said, it's much better to know that that's there. And to go around with a horse that's closed and dark, and hard, and not know that it's there. It's an improvement to know what's there, even though it's unpleasant. And then you can either continue doing loving kindness, practice, even sometimes just directed directly to that hardness. Not all of you just that part of you will just do loving kindness and just the way we talked about earlier. And that might help just tenderizing it might just be varied might be the very thing that hardness wants that never felt any love or kindness or tenderness towards it. Just having it washing yourself and kindness is related kind of fall. Or you might just switch to mindfulness practice and bring mindfulness to bear on that hardness and just just look at it very honestly and just feel it and be present for it. Study your Your reactions in relationship to it. But I would recommend that it's very significant that part of you and it's well worth practicing with it.

Thanks. So, sometimes I would log this reciting the words in my mind I actually have a very strong sense of well being either record for myself or factor in other kinds of just words. come and go. The feeling the feelings are not as important as what as what you're doing is watering those seeds of intention. And we often many of us focus and how we're feeling is being really what's important. Igot the feeling great. Feeling is not really secondary. So you can let go of any concern about am I feeling nice or not, and just keep matter of factly kind of watering the seeds of that intention. If the feeling of kindness does arise, there's an art to kind of not holding on to it, but kind of letting it kind of nudge you for to encourage you or keep you on track. So you're not to ignore the feeling, but you can kind of appreciate it and the appreciation in appreciation of it kind of helps keep you on track with the phrases and with the intention that makes sense.

Breathing now that I felt suffocated. I felt like I shouldn't be breathing in the hole as sending out subtraction Yeah. You were like what?

Oh, I see. I see. I see you have some old habit there.

The can take a long time to develop a wholesome relationship to oneself, to have a feeling of kindness or well being towards oneself. It's really well worth the endeavor the effort to find that, but it requires a lot of patience. And so if you benefactor works best for you to do a benefactors a lot and then gingerly kind of include yourself kind of in it, you know, realizing that the hard and painful or awkward or confusing, just keep doing it anyway, very gently and slowly, slowly, you'll find your way to a more wholesome relationship. to yourself and to me. Sorry. Oh, that's a great Yes, you can imagine yourself, you can imagine yourself sitting next to your benefactor or any other person and then do it to both of
you, maybe or so all kinds of great loving kindness, practice, you're allowed to be very creative. You can use your imagination, you can make up your own phrases. There's no right way of doing there's a traditional classic way of doing it. If you do that, do it on a long meditation retreat. It may be valuable there to kind of follow the classic formulas in a way. But if you're doing as part of daily life, if you can feel playful, even and creative, it might be a lot easier to come to a wholesome relationship to yourself. So imagine yourself sitting next to your benefactor, one benefactor, and each side

Some of you spoke and some of you Nothing happened at all. And please

I've never heard of people doing that. But as I said, you can be creative and certainly welcome. Welcome to try. But as you might imagine yourself imagine what your benefactor sees in you. When the benefactor looks at you what the image does a benefactor have a view because someone in the world has a good image of yourself, so it's possible to have it. And so if you put yourself in their shoes, in a sense, you might, might be easier. It doesn't have to be an image image also, it can be a feeling tone or feeling towards words. So

yes, please. I was trying to feel the feeling that when you're saying the feeling is the least of is the less important. One or the intention, right?

The wish, the sense of goodwill, the idea, the motivation, you know, oh, it'd be really good idea. If I was happy or that person was happy, it's kind of attitude is kind of like the, the, the theistic attitude of made that made that person be happy, God willing. So if you're not making it happen, you're not demanding it happen. Just, you know, God willing, kind of like you know, so this feeling doesn't have to be there just as kind of wish and certainly no demand or expectation that it's supposed to happen. God willing, you know kind of way doing it. And a lot of Buddhists will do this, do loving kindness meditation for people who are in distress. So like someone who's going for surgery or someone in great life crisis, or whatever it might be, and they want to do something to help but they're not actually possible to be present physically or whatever. Or even if you're present physically, like you're at someone's deathbed, they're dying, a wonderful practice to do this loving kindness practice to wish this person well and through the practice and, and through some channels, which maybe aren't so obvious. It seems to have a big effect on the people around us. And we can speculate what those channels are, but

Well if no one has more to say. What I like to do then is to do another aspect of loving kindness meditation as a closing meditation. But if you’d like to stand first, a few moments and stretch