So Good evening. And I'd like to continue today, the series I'm doing Mondays in April, which is on the topic of metta loving kindness. And as introduction to the today's part of his talk, I want to say that Buddhism puts a tremendous emphasis on attitude, and cultivating an appropriate or helpful attitude for our lives. And that also relates to how we practice meditation practice, the Buddhist spiritual life, that attitude is very important. And there's a wide variety of helpful attitudes may be different situations. And one attitude when I'm thinking about metta today, is kind of like an attitude is that of the attitude of an adventure. And so much of my own involvement with Buddhist practice over these decades feels like a grand adventure. Or I could never could have imagined the discoveries the areas I've had to face and deal with and open up to. It's just been kind of, you know, a wonderful adventure. At times, the attitude is one of playful, playfulness. And being playful, a little bit is very helpful, can be helpful in practice. Other times, playfulness is not an attitude, but rather one is kind of very much more sense of I don't know what to say that would convey the right idea, but it's the kind of seriousness or depth of meaning that this is really important, is important for myself. It's important for the world around us. And that's kind of an attitude that kind of supported me as I went in this. So in relationship to loving kindness, practice Kindness itself is an attitude. It's an attitude which are considered one of the primary Buddhist virtues and cultivating loving kindness. Expressing loving kindness is and making decisions based on loving kindness is considered to be very important in the Buddhist spiritual life. So the attitude is important, but then the other side of it is that very cultivation of that attitude the exploration of loving kindness is itself both an adventure and hopefully at times of playful phenomenon. It's kind of fun to do it, and a delight to be involved in this. And hopefully in being an adventure it's also a tight place where we get challenged. And I don't know if you think of love as something challenges you supposed to challenge you. But it's also challenges us in many ways. So, loving kindness for those of you who haven't been here is disposition attitude of wishing the welfare, welfare on others or anyone being yourself as well. So wishing them Well, sometimes it's translated as goodwill, basic goodwill towards people. And it's like into two kinds of goodwill. It's likened to the goodwill of mother who wants welfare wants the best for her children. And that could be you know, and then the other it's like into the kind of welfare good wishes that a really good friend would have for you. So those two so maybe one of them is more meaningful, different situations are meaningful for you, but those are the two kind of reference points for this sense of goodwill, wanting the best and wanting the best for someone is a mother a parent, or a good friend. And the So, one of the simplest ways of stating that is wishing for people's well being, be concerned with people's well being and wishing for that. Now, the cultivation that wish that attitude is the disposition of when someone develops is, has an effect on the person who has those the wishing. So it is not just for the sake of the other person that we cultivate with loving kindness, but for our own sake as well, that as we cultivate this disposition, this attitude of loving kindness, it changes our own heart. It opens us up, it softens us, it
creates a warmth. It creates a friendly disposition. It does a variety of beneficial things for us as well.
And when it's cultivated in meditation, it's a very significant place to cultivate great stability. Great
concentration with the mind the heart is very, very stable, very open, very radiant rather than having the
mind besiege By all its thoughts preoccupations, distractions, worries, fears, anxieties and all these
different things. The mind is an interesting thing, because how we experience the mind is very much
influenced by what's going on in the mind. And it's almost as if the certain activities of the mind are like
the coverings of the mind and cloud over the mind. Dark in the natural luminosity of the mind. And one
of the things that kind of does a darkening is Priyankka preoccupation with thinking and even
more so the thoughts were preoccupied with our egotistical thoughts, kind of caught up with their own
kind of self centered kind of way. And it doesn't seem like it's darkening. So many people if you have
meditated perhaps doesn't seem to feel the darkening or because, you know, the mind doesn't have
any color. You know, just we just kind of I don't know how to describe it exactly. But then maybe this is a
terrible example but I guess you have like a video if you're watching a video and before you put the
video in the screen is beautiful blue. And then you put the video in, and then you have all this drama.
And, and, and so you know, nothing seems wrong seems great the drama seems great. We're excited
we're into it is wonderful. And, and then after, you know, maybe after the video is over you're, you
realize, oh, there's this beautiful blue there. So maybe that's not a good example but it's kind of like
that, that the mind that if we preoccupied with a drama with our thoughts and all that, do we don't
realize that it kind of obscures natural luminosity, right natural radiance, clarity, openness, translucent
quality that the mind is and so the mind and Heart are considered almost the same in Buddhism. So
same thing with the heart, the heart gets covered over. And as we open up as we settle down, get
concentrated and stop being preoccupied with All Things that preoccupy us. There's a natural kind of
warmth that exists in the heart. And that natural warmth then can take various expressions. And one
expression is the one of this goodwill, wanting, wanting welfare for people wanting the best for people,
what are concerned with their well being? And, and perhaps a reference point for this is whatever sense
a very deep well being that you've had yourself. So perhaps there's some reference points in the
course of your life where you really felt a tremendous sense of well being. And maybe that's a guide
guiding light for you in your life. Oh, that's possible to have that sense of well being. And so to have that
as a reference point in oneself, that gives you a sense of what's possible for other people as well. And
oh, that'd be great. If that person has That'd be really nice. And they're very wish, of wanting that
wanting people to be, have this well being is hopefully something that makes you feel good, brings well
being to you. And I've certainly been in situations where, my, my care, my love, my kindness for others,
my compassion for others flowed purely enough clear cleanly enough, that that there was a sense of
happiness, or joy or delight that I felt in the very presence of those feelings I had for someone else. And
beginning I was very surprised by this, and I paid attention to it. Because I remember feeling this when I
was caring for someone who was struggling a little bit in their life and and

needed a lot of help physical help getting over steps and stuff that they lift the person up and help
personnel and I was so surprised how good I started feeling and I said, Well, you know, this is not about
me. Why should I be feeling so good? And, and I'm just helping this person, I'm just concerned about
the person, but I felt very good. Much of that many years later, I found one theory for why we feel good.
And that is a theory of oxytocin. That there's this chemical or my guess it's released when, when there's
very clean expressions of compassion or care for other people. And that that chemical that the body
produces, produces a sense of well being in people. And apparently, it's one of the reasons why
mothers are happy to nurse because nursing releases a lot of oxytocin. Isn't it nice? So that's a maybe
a reductionistic explanation for all this. But, you know, it's it kind of odd that we've had this well
being ourselves and taking care of someone else. If the caretaking is clean, it's not clean. You won't
feel it's so much. So in the classic description of practicing loving kindness, meditation of loving
kindness, the instruction is to start with oneself. And the classic instruction to start with yourself, then  

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has a little footnote that says, you might ask, if this is basically a system like this, is this really okay? To do this? Because the Buddha never gave people and there's no record of the Buddha ever giving it instructions that you should do loving kindness for yourself. And, and this was written 1500 years after the Buddha, no, no 1000 years after the Buddha. So that that's very famous. That Buddhist teacher says, you know, I'm teaching you to start with yourself. But you might wonder about this is the Buddha never said this. And so, you know, some people do ask that question is it egotistical to start with yourself? to focus on yourself that way, I thought Buddhism mostly was about freeing yourself from egotism. And here I'm told to begin by offering kindness, goodwill towards myself. And I think it's a good question because sometimes it can be. It's a very, it's a little bit tricky, maybe even dangerous to focus on oneself even in mindfulness, because sometimes, narcissism self preoccupation, egotism, can be entangled with a very kind of inward practice that we do in meditation. And sometimes it can actually reinforce a, a unhealthy sense of self self identity, self concept, in a variety of ways. But when meditation isn't well, it's actually supposed to be helping helping to free us from egotism from self centeredness. That causes a lot of suffering. So, but the same thing can happen with loving kindness practice loving kindness, practice towards oneself, can reinforce a variety of unhealthy attitudes towards oneself. So for example, one might be some people are really caught. If the operative word here is caught, caught up, caught in a victim mentality, or some variation of that, for me. Life's been hard on me, terrible things have happened to me. And when we're caught in that attitude of being a victim, and then we do loving kindness, to nourish myself to cherish myself, you know, I deserve loving kindness, I should be happy. Sometimes it can be actually reinforcing the very sense of impoverishment poor little me, poor me needs to be taken care of. That makes sense for him saying, so might be careful with this. There's a tremendous love and warmth that can be directed towards oneself. Be careful that it isn't kind of entangled with unhealthy attitudes. So what this Buddhaghosa, this ancient teacher said, is that what he said, Yes, the Buddha didn't teach loving kindness for oneself and in fact, The upper limits the upper reaches of what, how far you can go with a practice loving kindness cannot be reached by doing loving kindness to yourself and the interesting the you know the practices of the full development and it cannot be reached when you focus it on yourself. However, by developing loving kindness on yourself first, that increases your capacity for empathy for others. If you can feel good about yourself, feel love for yourself, then you're more likely to, to feel that sense of desire for other people's welfare. Understand the kind of easier to put them put yourself in their shoes. Oh, they have that capacity to. So for example,

my greatest sense of well being that I've had in my life has been in the context of meditation practice. And I've had lots of all kinds of varieties of giving good sense of well being really meditation practice has given me the greatest and, and in some of the feelings of loving kindness and love that come through meditation practice has been some of the nicest feelings of well being happiness that I've had. And as I've experienced that, then I've been able to see it and other people to appreciate and other people. And I've also been able to appreciate the other people have that capacity to you know, before I felt that for myself, I didn't know that people have that capacity. I saw some people were really happy that's nice for them, but didn't quite understand. And so as I understood it for myself, then I could, I could have a greater kind of wish aspiration or connection to that possibility other people make sense.

So as we do it towards ourselves, some people have to deal with a lot of challenges for that. And that's part of the adventure of it all. The challenge of some people have a lot of self criticism, to be proud of a lot of difficulty on itself to people are very wounded and what kinds of things that people feel. And so to be able to cultivate goodwill towards oneself person has to work through all these kinds of issues, all these feelings, all these emotional issues, what's going on. And so it's very, it's very helpful to do that, to explore that, and to be up against up against that rubbing up against ourselves that way. And then with time, hopefully something relaxes, something softens. And so the hardness that comes from self
criticism dissolves, and we're left with the warmth in our own heart. So it's a nice adventure. It's a very healthy, very helpful healing thing. And it's there's a lot of times where meditation teachers will instruct people Do loving kindness when there's so much fear or so much anxiety or so much self criticism that it's just not productive, not productive to do mindfulness practice, some people do mindfulness practice. And because there's so much, they're so self conscious to begin with. So self critical to begin with, that the mindfulness practice just gives them more information to be critical of, because they really kind of, you know, it makes it more so than don't do mindfulness. Don't pay so much careful attention to what's going on in your mind. Just Just cultivate this warmth, this loving kindness, and that's often called you know, heal, something needs to be healed. And so with time, the direction that loving kindness is going towards, is towards it ultimately is not towards love or kindness in for its own sake, but it is going towards liberation to freedom, and that becomes the reference point that will make For how what's how the practice and attitude the inner life is developing as we do the practice of loving kindness is there a greater sense of freedom in particular freedom from neurotic self, preoccupation, clinging from self centeredness is there you know that height holding that we might have there is there a softening of the sense of self in a healthy way dissolving of the hardness and if there is then great if there isn't, then that needs to be looked at. As the softening happens in the opening happens, then the instruction is to turn the turn the mind from, from oneself, loving kindness from oneself to towards others. And, and again, the idea here is that once you've done it for yourself, you have a stronger basis from which then to offer some genuine kindness or love towards others. And so it begins with the best benefactor someone with whom someone who has had that expressions of kindness or compassion towards yourself, and for whom it's it's a clean, easy relationship for you to wish well for them. So often a benefactor is considered to that kind of person. And then from there it begins going from the benefactor to a good friend, to a medium friend, to a mild friend, to a minor friend, with the idea being that you're going from the earth easiest. And once you have it established, where it's easy, then you begin exploring, how can I do it where it's not, it's easy, but not quite as easy as a benefactor. So you might have a really good friend who is easy to feel love kindness, for if you do things for them, you help them out, you want them to be happy. But you realize that every once in a while, there's this little feeling of jealousy or a little feeling of, you know, resentment. interval, you have this leftover hurt, that's normally not there. But you know, once 15 years ago, they said something it's kind of those kind of still little kind of hurts or irritates And so, as we do that, let me kind of practice to that friend, then the idea is not to ignore the difficulties of the relationship you have with to work with it and see if something in a healthy way something can be dissolved, forgiven, worked through so that the kindness the love becomes limited or unfiltered or uninhibited. So it becomes complete. Beautiful process. So then you do it with your good friend. We have this teeny little thing about and then you have your medium friend. You know who, you know, you're good friends, you get along. But you know There is a couple of things you know you don't. And so you get to explore what that's about. And work with that and kind of find out what that's about. And this doesn't mean you're we're denying that people have their foibles, we're not kind of ignoring it. But rather we're, even if someone has, you know, someone does unskillful things or even hurt you sometimes we're not ignoring that papering it over and say, well, that's doesn't you know, sweet you know, sugaring it over. It's it's hopefully clearly seeing the shortcomings other people have and in spite of it, not ignoring it. Be foolish about it, but in spite of it, can we open our hearts completely to that person? So there's kind of a very pure feeling of kindness and love to that person. And what does it take to do that? When it advantage we have about this when we do with meditation is the other person doesn't have to No. So for some people that makes it a lot easier because it gets, you know, it's private. It can be private. And so as as we do this work, hopefully you get a sense that you're actually liberating yourself from the ways that you you're clinging or stuck or held. So that the openness, the radiance of the heart, is limited to stuff. There's a liberating process to this. And that is really the whole point of this loving kindness practice is to move towards
liberation. Doesn't have to be the point. But that's the ultimate point. So I want to read to you this evening, a sutra sutra discourse of the Buddha. That's called the discourse on loving kindness. And this is kind of those it's taken to be the central reference point for loving kindness, in itself is practice. And I think it's quite beautiful. And I hope my Have it in translation of it makes it beautiful enough. But most people focus on the middle part of the text. And they don't really notice the opening and the end. And the opening makes it very clear that the loving kindness practice is not being offered here for the purposes of developing loving kindness practice. It's offered as a path to liberation to freedom to Nirvana. Isn't that great? Some people think, Oh, you know, I'll do this loving kindness practice for a while, and then I'll get to a real Buddhism. You know, the liberation, the Nirvana stuff, the mindfulness stuff, they don't really kind of, you know, get to real work. And in fact, that attitude exists in Buddhism, even I've heard I know of Asian teachers who relate to metta loving kindness practice, as kind of like kids children's practices, kind of like kindergarten. You know, you should really get on to the real stuff. But according to the Buddha The loving kindness practice is also meant to be a practice that leads to liberation. And here the state of liberation in this text is called the state of peace. So it opens this way to reach the state of peace, there is going to be a doubt about it, it says and however, in order to highlight this, I reversed in translating it, the first and second sentence. So if you read every other translation, this part about the piece is a second sentence and often is not so clear the translator what they actually mean they kind of lost. And so by second sentence, you're already you know, jumping ahead. So I put it front and center to make it clear that's where the Texas to reach the state of peace. One skilled in the good should be capable upright, straightforward and easy to speak to. Gentle and not proud, contented and easily supported, living lightly, and with few duties, wise and with senses calmed, not arrogant, and without greed for supporters, and should not do the least thing that the wise would criticize. One should reflect, may all be happy and secure. May all beings be happy at heart. all living beings, whether weak or strong, tall, large, medium or short, tiny or big, seen or unseen, near or distant, born or to be born. May they all be happy.

Let no one deceive another, or despise anyone anywhere. Let no one through anger or aversion, wish for others to suffer as a mother, with her own life, to protect her child, her only child, so toward all beings should one cultivate a boundless heart, with loving kindness for the whole world, should one cultivate a boundless heart, above, below and all around without obstruction, without, without standing or walking, sitting or lying down. Whenever one is, when is awake. They won't stay with this recollection. This is called a sublime abiding here and no one who is virtuous, endowed with vision, not taken by views and having overcome all greed. All greed for sensual pleasure, will not be reborn again. So nothing reborn again is another synonym for this piece or this Nirvana, this liberation to reach a state of peace so begins by talking about these beautiful qualities. And I don't know how it was for you to listen to those, but I'm inspired every time I see these qualities, and I wonder, do I have those in myself? And then and then there's a practice of loving kindness which here is done by reflecting, May all beings be happy, no matter what kind of beings are made, they may they be happy, maybe have well being, deep sublime abiding well being. And then the attitudes is is related to that as a mother and like that, which is cultivate a boundless heart, nice expression and boundless heart. So moving towards liberation, so in that kind of context, maybe gives a certain some different kind of meaning and maybe even value of seriousness to the truest practice of loving kindness. It's not meant to be kind of a lightweight kind of practice. It's really meant to be as it as possible to move to the very heart of what Buddhism is about. And so the adventure of engaging in loving kindness practice is not just the practice of feeling love, feeling kindness and goodwill, but to actually work with that which keeps us bound or held or constricted or attached. So we work then through these people we work through, you know, our, you know, benefactor, and then on down down towards increasing difficult until we come to a category of people that in this tradition is called the neutral person. And some people complain so there's no one is really neutral. You know, just people so right away, no matter who they are,
but the neutral person is, you know, basically someone who you don't really know so well, and you haven't had a chance to develop any real impression of them, no one, you don't really have any amount of animosity towards them. But you don't really have any particular goodwill to them. Either you've been at a time or the chance really to do it. They're kind of more or less a neutral person. So I know some people will choose a mail carrier who ever talked to you see the person come to your house, and you know, for months or years, but you've never talked to the person and you know, really how many, you know, maybe more or less kindly disposed but but you know, there's more or less a neutral person or a clerk at a store, a neighbor who's you know, a block away or something someone you see on them, maybe you see someone on the on the bus, if you go to Work on the bus and you see someone regularly. But you don't talk you don't you know just someone who they sit in the back, you sit in the front, but you kind of recognize a share the bus with them. And so then you begin exploring what does it take for you to cultivate loving kindness to that person to have goodwill towards that person? And some people who do this find this is a really fascinating area of loving kindness. Because what does it mean to have love or kindness or goodwill to someone for whom, you know, is not close to us, not a friend to someone who for whom is not extending kindness or friendship for you. This is kind of moving on to kindness to a place where there's no exchange involved. And if you're not getting anything back, the person doesn't know you. And so can What does it take to feel kindness to such a person? And what are the barriers to doing that? Some people don't want to open up to someone who's a neutral kind of more or less a stranger. Because if you open your heart to that person, well then maybe Have to invite them home. Maybe then you're not safe. It's better to be closed and not pay attention. I know what are the implications if you open heart. And so, hopefully it's a rich area of exploration with the idea that if you explore it and work through those issues, not only can you feel the love towards strangers, more importantly, you've liberated the heart you freed something up. Or the feminist I believe is that a natural heart of hearts which is resting actually itself without any limitations, any clinging any attachments, any barriers or whatever, will naturally feel kindness and goodwill towards all people. And so, as we as we liberated positive liberation and frees up that kind of attitude so this makes me think of And so, so. So this is how it you know, so in meditation, it can be this process. And one of the supports for this. And one of the ways that makes all this really real, was that kind of idealistic is to begin expressing it in practice to not just kind of keep it to yourself. In fact, there have been not enough, not just not a few Buddhist meditators, who have cultivated boundless love for all beings in meditation, only to get up out of meditation. You know, say, you just start my meditation, how could you, you know, get angry at someone or, you know, realize, you know, it's, and, you know, Oh, I'm so good. Wow, I must be the next you know, St. Redwood City. And then you get in your car. It just vanishes and so Actually one of the very important areas to explore loving kindness and explore explore yourself in the process in order to free yourself is to be an exploring what does it take and now to express kindness, goodwill, for others in life itself. How What is it like to kind of, you know, show up at the supermarket, and then have goodwill for the clerk, not just kind of just Oh, yeah, I can Oh, yeah, you know, I wish them well, but really kind of taken the person there and stop and somehow have an exchange which is feels genuine. But also the person who kind of feels a little bit better, feels nice smile. someone cares about me. That's nice. Someone expressed some goodwill, someone recognized, saw me as a person, just to see someone as a person. Sometimes, I haven't given money to homeless people. But sometimes I stopped and smile and talk to them and every once in a while, hasn't happen that often I get the impression that that was more meaningful for them than the money. Isn't that nice? You know, just take take the time.

So how we are is very important. So there's a, I think a nice teaching from the Buddha. In ancient India, there were still in India to some degree, big degree, I guess there's there's castes, different castes. And so peoples worth worth of status. And society has a lot to do with their caste they're in and you're born into a caste. And the Buddha was somewhat critical of this kind of caste system. In particular, he was
critical of the way in which people status or maybe status, but their worth, their value as a kind of person, or the worthiness came from how they were born. And so he would ask someone this question what do you think? are only the Brahmin priests from priests being the highest caste or only Brahmin priests capable of a mind of loving kindness toward to toward a certain direction, reading it outwards without hostility and never will and not members of the noble merchant or worker caste. And the person says no people of all forecasts are capable of cultivating a mind of loving kindness. Then the Buddha said, then on the strength of what argument in support of what authority, do the Brahmins in this case say Brahmins are the highest caste, those of other castes are inferior Brahmins are the heirs of Brahma. Interesting. So, here the Buddha wanted to say that person's worthiness Status even to me, doesn't come with how you're born. The city comes with the attitude that you have some choice about. And so if you if you have an attitude loving kindness

that is what makes a person a Brahmin. That's what makes a person worthy or, you know, kind of a high status if you are if you allow that, how you are, so not who you are. But how you are better than I think is for some people here in America is a bit of a challenge in teaching. Some people prefer to feel that their value comes from who they are. Maybe that could also be the case, sometimes a certain kind of way. But for the Buddha, at least the challenge here is that what's important is not who you are But how you are. So then Buddhism has a lot to do with taking responsibility for how we are for attitude. And this whole thing about loving kindness has to do with taking responsibility and explore this area, explore the territory of goodwill, of kindness of friendliness, friendship, and what can you do to stretch that to open it up to develop it to heighten it, to make it kind of something that becomes your disposition that's ready at hand in all kinds of situations, as opposed to being preoccupied caught up, afraid, anxious, you know, whatever. It's so close down to the medium, so the mind is kind of obscured. And so there's no chance for that to come out. So that's the exciting thing that I think is really fun to, to engage in the process. And I certainly see in myself that it's not sometimes it's not easy and when it's not easy. It's not easy. And when it's not easy in some ways, it's the most productive time. And, but it's not easy. And so I find unitaspark spend time sometimes exploring Okay, well, I feel I can feel good about those people feel warmth towards those people but not to that person. Okay, Gil, what's going on? Oh, I don't have to deal with that. You know, I'm not gonna see that person again. That person's, you know, jerk. Why should I waste my time I could be sitting and meditating peacefully. I have important things to do. Isn't it important to stop tweeting some, like a jerk? have that attitude even if they deserve it?

So what does it take and what does it take to make it such real? So it's not so sincere. So it's As I take was export. So those are my thoughts for today. And I would encourage you, if you're interested in this exploration, this adventure, for the next week, to not only stretch yourself with your kindness or friendliness, in meditation or in your own heart, but stretch yourself a little bit in action in life with people, look for some opportunities to offer some simple friendliness, goodwill, kindness, to beyond the confines, beyond the limits of where you usually take it. So, you know, and then bring it and see what happens. See what happens to the relationship, see what happens to the first thing you offer to but see what happens to you and see what you can learn about yourself. And if you find yourself in capable, move beautifully into some area or stretch into some new area. Say to yourself great. rate, I found a limitation. I'm so happy. Finally, this is good, because that's where the path is found. That's where Buddhism is found is when you encounter your limitations. Right. Now let's practice with it. As opposed to, again, one more limitation. You know, it's an adventure to play. It's something you know, it's a really worthwhile thing. And then you're all capable of raising to the challenge. Thank you very much.