

2011-05-06 The Paramis Metta

Tue, 8/18 11:08AM • 2:29:15

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

people, loving kindness, goodwill, compassion, kindness, person, feel, practice, wishing, metta, buddhism, attitude, cultivating, love, sense, loving kindness practice, helping, life, meditation, world

SPEAKERS

Gil Fronsdal

So welcome everyone. And so here we are on our ninth Dharma practice day of this series, a Dharma practice day on the perfections. And those of you who are new to these Dharma practice days, welcome for this one here. You're welcome. Even though the ninth one at all, they hopefully stand on their own as well. And these Dharma practice days are meant to be a time for kind of community practice to explore some topic or theme of Buddhist practice, in some focused way, in the course of the day, what to do together with others. Much of the way that Buddhist spiritual life develops isn't in community with other people and in monasteries, Buddhist monasteries, often in the conversations that monks and nuns practitioners have together where a lot of the Learning and Development grows, marry each other, we hear ourselves, we see what's going on. And we hear teachings from the teachers perhaps. And then there's a discussion about it amongst people. And so here and it kind of, are kind of urban suburban life. People sometimes hear teachings or read, read teachings, whatever, and then go off into their life and don't really have a chance sometimes to have the kind of discussions about it and explorations of it. That often makes it very rich. So these Dharma practice days are designed to have a variety of different ways of exploring a particular topic. And more often than not, it does involve often the chance for you, you all are here to break into small groups and have discussions around particular focused questions or themes about the day. There's some teachings I'll give, and there's some meditation, maybe guided meditation that's included and it's kind of a rhythm hopefully through the day of going including some meditations, some teaching some chance for questions, some time of discussion amongst you all. And the theme for this year so the perfections, which are 10 practices and 10 qualities that can be developed within us that are particularly helpful for the unfolding the development of Buddhist practice overall. And so, these 10 are generosity it's helpful. If you develop a generous spirit enters kind of your capacity for generosity, it turns out a lot easier to develop Buddha spirituality overall, partly because generosity puts us in relationship to other people. generosity is not meant to be just something you do in your privacy of your own house, but it's involves relationship other people. And, and I'm very fond of the fact that Buddhist spirituality The classic development of it begins by creating healthy relationships with other people. And that's partly the function of generosity. It's not just going and meditating silently by yourself, but being in relationship in a healthy way. And the second perfection is that of perfection of ethics of integrity. And that also it's, you know, very personal thing integrity. But it's often ethics is something we do in relationship to other people, again, creating those healthy relationships. And then, the third is capacity for letting go. There's wisdom. So if you let go wisely, before the quality, then there's effort making effort. There's, when you make effort, it's good to be patient. And so that the next quality is patience. And then there is what's the next one, truthfulness and followed by resolve And then loving kindness, which is a topic for today. And then the last one next month will be equanimity. loving kindness again. And we're clearly back in some ways back in the world of our relationships to people, because you could have certainly loving kindness towards yourself. But it's also meant to be something we do in relationship to other people. And part of the value of this

seeing our spiritual life in relationship to others, and not just a private individual kind of thing is that is that I think it speaks to the deep connection that human beings have to each other and how important that is in our lives. And it's hard to imagine spiritual growth, without it being also somehow happening in relationship to the world around us. In Buddhism, this is often articulated in the close connection between awakening or liberation, spiritual freedom, and the arising of the cultivation of compassion. And, in fact, with ease 10 qualities that perfections

ordinary generosity is not a perfection, perfection is only considered. generosity is only considered perfection, when somehow or other it's informed or integrated or motivated by the path to liberation awakening, and the expression or the activation of compassion in the world. So if to create to make one of these 10 qualities of perfection, it means what it means is that it's integrated with these two qualities. So we see how it supports us and helps us to let go in a very deep way and it liberating beautiful way and it helps us to feel or to express or to act on compassion for others. loving kindness seems closely connected to certainly the compassion part. You know, it's kind of love is kind of both of them are kind of kinds of love and Buddhism. It's a little bit harder to see how loving kindness is connected to letting go. But if we if we hold on tightly to our clings and attachments. A form is kind of a barrier between our capacity for empathy and our sensitivity to feel and be aware of other people. As the cross the barriers of the heart fall away through liberation through freedom, then the natural sensitivity, and my natural capacity for empathy and caring begins to operate more, more more strongly. So that we see I think most people see that as they become free or spiritually, it often translates to also feeling greater capacity for love, for loving kindness, for compassion for these different beautiful qualities. So today, the topic is metta. And it's in our particular Theravada Buddhist tradition, metta is considered to be the foundation for the other forms of beautiful love. Love is a very important part of this tradition, though often we don't think Use the word love by itself. Maybe because in English the word love is kind of so vague what it means. I love you know, I love Thai food, you know? Yeah, sure. And but the these these four forms of love that championed in this tradition, there's loving kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and then a certain kind of equanimity that is understood to be a form of love. And but of those four, loving kindness is seen as the foundation for the other three. The goodwill, the generosity of spirit, that goodwill, that there's metta when it encounters suffering, morphs into compassion, someone suffers someone or goodwill takes the form of wishing that suffering to go away when it encounters someone who is having lots of wonderful success, healthy success and happiness in life, then that goodwill morphs into sharing in that happiness and wishing that happiness continues for them. And then when that goodwill encounter someone who's maybe having something, some kind of suffering some difficulties in life, where we can't really help them, compassion does not we can feel compassion, but we can't really help them. They're on their own, they're making choices of their own, something's happening that we can't really help, then there's a certain kind of, or not appropriate to help or we have to leave them alone to find their own way. Then there's this kind of love called equanimity, which I like to refer to as Grant parently love. And the reason for that is that the grandparent hopefully you know, ideally, you know, loves the grandchildren, and will take care of the grandchildren you sometimes, but they tend that often maybe they're always the ideal when it goes tends not, tends not to have the anxiety of a first time parent. And first time parent I know first experience, and you know, everything can see so consequential and meaningful and oh my god, you don't want it. And now, you know, this is the end of everything or something. And then, but a grandparent has seen it all before. And, you know, the little kids, you know, falls and scrapes her knee and really bloody and, you know, it's, that's what kids do. grandparents have seen and many times and so they do what needs to be done, but they don't get all worked up. Or the kid says, in one, one minute says, you know, Mommy, I'll marry you. And then, you know, a minute later they with great ferocity says I hate you.

Now, you know, grandparents have seen all that before and see the coming and going through this and so they're kind of like more economists about it. The Love is still there, but they don't take it. Don't get too worked up and caught up and then drama of the moment the way some first time parents can do, maybe not any of you, thank you the first time parents, but I know some can be that be that way. So that's why I think equanimity is kind of grandmother they love, this love it doesn't get caught up in the drama of things is so much so. So loving kindness is is is sometimes defined in different ways. The word is metta and it's sometimes even translated different ways. It's most common in our tradition to in our Buddhist tradition is translated as loving kindness. Somebody people like that a lot. Some people prefer other words, I like I like the both words because the loving part refers to the feelings of warmth of appreciation, of kind of a heartfelt connectedness with other people. That kindness and implies that it's not passive. And that's just not a feeling of just, you know, goodwill or love. But it's also kind of wishing or extending oneself for the welfare of other people in some way or other. Tanisha Baker was here last Sunday and he preferred translation of goodwill. Because sometimes loving he feels that loving kindness sometimes implies that you're always kind of proactively out there, being kind and doing something. Whereas goodwill, it can be a feeling of goodwill, of generosity of wanting something wanting, wishing someone well, but not necessarily gushing over them or unnecessarily going out there to do something. You can be kind of minding your own business and feel a lot of goodwill for people if they come into your orbit that goodwill is expressed. But it's not like you go out of your way to be kind or actively you're kind but you know, you're just you know, you You can be quite independent of them, but you receive them into your orbit into your presence when the need is there with goodwill, but if they don't need anything from you your goodwill is still there but nothing's required of you don't have to feel you have to do something which I think he felt you have to do if you're imply loving kindness something some people like benevolence as a translation. And so different possible choices. Some people just like the word kindness by itself. classic definition is to liking it or to compare it to the feeling you would have for a really good friend, and B and the word metta is a cognate. To the Buddhist word for friend, metta friend, the word friend is Mita. And so they come from the same root. And so the kind of the kind of kindness kind of goodwill you'd have for a friend is the standard for doing loving kindness for having this whatever that is. So it's not romantic loving kindness, romantic love. It's some different kind. Another way of seeing it is that another Deaf classic definition for it or description of it. The characteristic of meta is to promote well being. Its function is to prefer well being just like someone's well being, whether it's your own or someone else. It manifests in the removal of annoyance. It's proximate cause is seeing the loveliness of beings that beautiful to be able to see something beautiful in someone else. And I think that's one of the things that I attribute to my meditation practice my Buddhist practice is that I see people as being beautiful for much more than I ever did when I was younger, and, and you know, because partly I don't see beauty anymore very much physically. But I see something shining through people even if they don't even know it themselves. And I see so much of it in the world. It's quite, quite wonderful. So the proximate cause is seeing the loveliness of beings. it succeeds, when it makes ill will subside. And it fails when it produces selfish affection.

So the difference between there's a kind of affection or kind of love that's common enough. That is, that is, you know, love is love. What we call love is many different things. And sometimes we say we love someone. And it's, it's entangled with lust. You mean I remember when I was a teenager, I would certainly love girls, women. Lots of love and boy was there Desire. I think maybe what I was, you know what I called Love was just raw desire that was for my sick. Thank you. And none of you I'm sure have that confusion but but so it is loving kindness fails when it's confused with or produces selfish affection, affection was mostly used for me whatever myself so it's considered a perfection in that that really is a tremendous support for Buddhist practice overall. And, and the whole path of liberation of being free from attachment clinging is supported by cultivating loving kindness. It's I think it's easier to let go it's easier to want to not be attached to be selfish. If you feel your life connected in a loving way and an

added attitude of goodwill For this world we have. So it's fairly common in Buddhism to actively cultivate goodwill or cultivate loving kindness, cultivate compassion. Because we don't have to leave the degree of love, we feel the degree of loving kindness we feel to chance to whatever it's, you know, we Bumble through our life. And sometimes we fall in love, sometimes we feel all this friendship to someone, and causes and conditions come together a certain way. And, you know, you know, sometimes, you know, when we fall in love there, there's an English expression of it's chemistry, we attributed to chemistry, as if you have no role. Just you know, you put those ingredients together and there's an explosion, you know, and it just happened that that person had the right ingredients, and you have these ingredients and, you know, you know, it's kind of mystery how it happens. It's magic or mystery. It just, you know, I'm not responsible just happened. When I was about, I don't know how many years five, six years of doing a lot of Buddhist practice. I got really interested in trying to understand or trying to see how a choice worked in my life? how there was choice and feelings and attitudes and beliefs and different things that I did. And one of the interests was just to see if I could see the choice behind following them up. And because before I kind of assumed that was just something that you fall, right, you just was an accident or, you know, you there was no choice involved, just kind of boom to happen. And so it took a lot of mindfulness, a lot of care and a lot of attention, you know, when I got into situations where that might happen. And with time I began seeing Yes, there was a choice, it was a choosing towards that goes towards something, that choosing towards to pick something up and be involved in something. It was kind of subtle and very minute or very fast. But there was choices involved. But you're mindful has been quite strong to see that Oh, that is you pick something up and so on. To say that in Buddhism, we don't let falling in love or feel love or kindness, loving kindness, be a chance, but it's something we can cultivate, we can develop, we can create, we can create the conditions, we can choose to create the conditions. So we're more likely to feel compassion more likely to feel love or goodwill, a lot more likely to have a positive attitude towards other people. And part of Buddhist spirituality is to help create those conditions, you might not be able to necessarily automatically call evoke feelings of love or compassion. But you're more likely to have it because you've created the conditions for it to arise more often. So in this last meditation we did, the big I gave you kind of a guided little guided meditation, to try to set yourself more at ease. And part of the reason for that is that it's a lot I believe, it's a lot easier to feel goodwill to feel loving kindness, if you feel at ease, if you feel safe. Some of the conditions that help promote it, so if you could feel more at ease, then I felt maybe Even more interesting to do that reflection we did on the different kinds of love you've experienced in which were more satisfying, more meaningful for you. So is that was that something that was interesting for you? Is that something that produce some reflect interesting reflections to do that? Now people are nodding their head, yes. So then then because of that condition, because of that condition,

I would like to, for you guys to have a chance to discuss that a little bit and hear hear each other here. What came out of that for you, each of you. And so before we take a break, and some of you this kind of dead time of day, people's coffee is beginning to have an effect. So you might need to slip out, you know, as part of the group if you need to, but we'll take a break after the groups. But what I'd like to suggest is you form groups of four people and share it with your group. What came up for you, or what you're comfortable sharing is what came up for you, you have to share things you're comfortable saying, but what came up for you in that reflection about the different forms of love that you've known in your life? And particularly which ones were most satisfying, most meaningful, most peaceful? Or, you know, most something, you know, for you that you really valued the most. And what were the characteristics of that? What How did that manifest? Were the conditions that allowed that wouldn't that feel like for you? What value that that that kind of feeling have for you in your life? that give you something to enough? And don't feel like you have to answer the question. Like there's a right answer. Different people will respond to hear different things in these kinds of questions. So feel free to find your

own way out of those questions into your life. Make sense? And then share yourself here that was fine. Find three other things. To sit with, and we'll take probably about 1012 minutes or so I'll get a sense of how the conversations are going. But take 1012 and then just so before we take a break, maybe it'd be nice for us to hear a little bit from some of you what that was like and any surprises, any discoveries, anything significant seems like it'd be interesting to share to the group, given that I wasn't part of any of the groups, you know, get a sense of what's going what happened. But also, probably each group had a little different discussion. So is some way of kind of, of spreading the wealth in a sense by hearing a little bit out something but

in our group, there was An overwhelming theme which was

that you need to feel safe

in and in love.

And that there should be and that you feel safer when there are no expectations or demands either way. And so it's kind of a flowing, give and take

with no demands. Great, thank you.

So in our group, there seemed to be a consensus that it was simpler, more easeful to experience loving kindness with strangers, because people, you know, your children, your, in my case, you know, husband or whatever, with family, it's, there's all this other stuff, you know, I mean, of course, You love them and you know you do and you are most likely your firm in that. But if you talk about the ease and the more simple simplicity, for example, helping a stranger spontaneously, there's no judgment on their part. They're probably surprised and pleased, you know. So there's all these good feelings back and forth. And that moment is very simple and pure in a way without a lot of

package.

Right, thank you. Back there in that tier.

So for me, I can't speak for the group. It's just my experience is that the first thing that came to mind is on the surface the people I feel most at ease with are the people I have no friction with. The people perhaps don't have like good people skills that don't just rubbish. Wrong way all a family's just getting your face that sort of thing. Whatever realize is that the most satisfying ones are the ones who act actually,

that I had an opportunity to be mindful of my behavior. My reaction when I was reacting negatively to that person that I realized is something that I wanted to change about me. It's not about them, it's more about me. And when I did make the change, the relationship changed completely beautiful. So it was satisfying, most satisfying to me in that sense. And part of what was satisfying was letting go of these complex you had exactly beautiful, thank you.

I was noticing just the ability to be with the person however they are. And so it didn't matter so much.

How they were as being with them with the attitude of not needing pushing away.

So feeling of love that had no need as part of it, and no need to avoid just just being present. Nice. Behind you.

We two points. One was I think we found it easier when we thought of goodwill instead of loving kindness, that loving kindness seemed like a stretch sometimes.

And that also we talked a little bit about chemistry and about trying to figure out specifics of what's in that chemistry what is it that attracts you to that person or propels you

Thank you.

Speaking Just from my own experience, I'm glad you brought up that question about examples of loving kindness people. The I struggle with that question, you know what to family? Okay, that was difficult. I think it's like a lot of baggage with personal relationships. Even with any type of personal relationship, I noticed that there was baggage, so it gets in the way. And I work with, in general, my work is loving kindness. I'm a body worker, I teach meditation, I do Tai Chi, I stress management. But more often than not even the most needed clients that are in pain. I could do the work and be loving kindness, but it's hard to feel loving kindness to those people, even though they're really in need. But when I started teaching inmates and people in the halfway house for that population, it was easy for me to be loving and kind without any type of judgment. It seems to me that it's a matter of how much compassion I have towards that person is directly related to how easy it is to be loving and kind. It's like that compassion part is really important,

nice and beautiful. And so for some reason for you, inmates and people halfway homes elicit a different kind of compassion. Oh, definitely. And then the compassion of someone who's physically in challenge and they need a massage or something.

Right? Or even if they're in great pain, chronic pain, which is what I specialize in,

so that that's a different kind of compassion then so the chronic pain doesn't elicit the same kind of compassion as for someone who's incarcerated,

right, that's it. I think it's a population of the incarcerated ones and the ones that are in a hope, like a halfway house has a lot to do with me understanding that a lot of them have been abused. Mm hmm. Right and a lot of different ways. So there's certainly That kind of gets to me. So there's a compassionate part that is very strong about that scenario. And I'm sure that some of these people don't even have that background. But I just embraced the whole thing. And it works. So that was a very interesting thing I learned just right in the beginning. Great. And I was afraid I was gonna be bored today. Okay,

thank you. We'll do one more.

So our group, I don't want to say elderly but older,

and I think

wiser, we're older somebody. And

so I think we related to, to your use of the word choices. Yeah, that as we've gone through our life, we have seen the choices we've made. And then we specifically decided to make the kind of choices like you're seeing Today that, that you could reach into yourself and find compassion for an area that doesn't come naturally to you. And so we talked about those choices we've made

beautiful increase. It's a great, great, great, that's and that's a beautiful thing, the idea of choosing to reach into ourselves to have compassion or loving kindness, where it's not easy. It's not obvious, and maybe even worse, counterintuitive, or were some of the messages we get from other people as you shouldn't do to that person. But some something something inside of us wants to come forth from there. Nice. Well, thank you very much. And so there are different kinds of love different kinds of ways of feeling. And by beginning to differentiate between the different kinds, it's possible to cultivate or develop or highlight or value Particular forms of love that are the ones that are most valuable for you are the ones that you most want to develop or most want to have the bigger part of your life. If it's all one big Bush, then you know, you can't, you know, you're not going to have as much choice around which direction you're going to develop and highlight. And so the cultivation of loving kindness or metta or goodwill, is a particular subset of the wide world of English word love. And so to begin to kind of identifying something inside of us ourselves that positively corresponds to this word. metta is one of the tasks of cultivating more metta. You don't want to get too hung up and what the Buddhist definition technically exactly is and but you know, because then you might not find yourself endlessly endlessly kind of, you know, trying to match someone else's definition. But, you know, you get kind of in the general idea of what loving kindness is in Buddhism. And, and then what it What can you find that course best corresponds to that from yourself from your own experience. So you have your own personal reference point for something that you're cultivating and developing. So hopefully that exercise point point, pointed you in that direction. So let's take a break and Alright, let's start again in here at 11 1520 minutes.

So, are you almost all back?

So, I thought we would do another meditation, meditation time, and then I'll do offer you a guided meditation and some aspect of loving loving kindness. And that can also be the kind of reflection or the basis from which we'll have some discussion afterwards. So, take a comfortable, alert posture

and then gently close your eyes

and take a few moments to feel your posture. Feel your body

and perhaps with the help of the movements in your body that comes with breathing. Ease yourself into your bodies. All into your body. Relax into your body.

If it's possible to soften your belly relax the belly and let gravity help your belly. Be settle down, open up.

Perhaps letting your shoulders relax as well soften

and then seeing if you could quiet down the coarser forms of thinking going on for you. If you're thinking having conversations or planning or remembering or actively heading is very active commentary about what's happening. See if you can, like, like, like you're dimming the lights or quieting the music. See if you can let your thinking mind become softer quieter,

then tuning more fully into your body breathing

noticing how the body moves and changes as you breathe in and breathing out.

Every time you breathe out, see if you could let go of whatever thinking you have whatever you're thinking about

letting go of what you're thinking. So that as you breathe in the experience of breathing in can be more open new,

more intimate

And then see if you can bring to mind, some person you know for whom it's relatively easy for you to feel good Will do feel loving kindness or to feel a kind of love or goodwill, which is satisfying and meaningful for you, even brings you a sense of well being, even just to feel that way towards somebody. Think of that person think of such a person. If it's hard, remember it doesn't have to be a dramatic example of this. Just whatever comes to mind.

And then thinking about this person, consider what your attitude is that towards that person, the feelings, the thoughts, the attitude how you behold the person how you look upon them that might help you feel your goodwill or your kindness towards them.

This loving kindness has an element of generosity in it a generous attitude towards others. A kindness, goodwill looking upon someone as if they're important or worthy or valuable.

Perhaps it comes with wishing them the best kind of a well wishing

So now See if you can take whatever attitude you have goodwill towards this person and see if you can turn that attitude around and have it for yourself.

Can unisensory look upon yourself with goodwill generosity of loving kindness

Can you bring an attitude of goodwill Genuine goodwill towards yourself for yourself

looking upon yourself with an attitude of respect if you're worthy of appreciation or goodwill

looking upon yourself this way, so the very attitude that you have, is itself satisfying and meaningful. It's it's satisfying to gaze here on this person

with goodwill

And then as we continue here, I'm going to offer you some individual words. And when you

and when you hear this word, gently repeat it to yourself, kind of like you would drop a pebble into a pond. And all these ripples radiate out from where the pebble went into the water. Say the word to yourself as you're dropping it into your into yourself and let the ripples of associations have feelings of attitudes connect this word kind of ripple out into yourself. These are words that somehow are tied to Goodwill or loving kindness for oneself. And then when you say each word you might say it a few times. And you say that word, see if the word can also help the thinking mind become quieter. As if you're

listening to a sound far in the distance, you're opening yourself up to listen to how this quality reverberates through you.

So the first word is happy

Happy

the second word is safety

Safety

third word is peace

peace

Final Word is

love

Love

And perhaps continuing, saying whichever of these words is most meaningful for you. See if you can hold yourself in an attitude of goodwill generosity. Perhaps reminding yourself you're a person who's capable of feeling these things. And how much how wonderful would be how appropriate would be. If these could be these four qualities could be more of your life that you're worthy. And it's okay to wish yourself this to allow this yourself, see yourself this way.

And then then the last couple of minutes of this sitting. Come back to simple practice of breathing. Breathing in and breathing out as if breathing is at the middle of this wide universe of your experience

And then to end this sitting pick a couple of deep breaths. Get ready to open your eyes

So, in Buddhist circles, there is a story story which is popularly popularly told which goes back to the time of the Buddha of there being a king who approached his queen wife and asked her who was a touchy loved the most Who did you hold as being most dear And I imagined that this king was maybe a little bit as maybe some kings are a little bit full of himself self importance and you know, center of attention all the time. So probably he was expecting or even demanding that the answer be while you of course there you're in the most important you How are you? I love you the most you're the most dear. But you said I hold myself most dear. So he didn't like this answer. So he, they said they I don't know who decided but they decided to go visit the Buddha. And they explained this whole conversation to the Buddha. And the Buddha replied and said he's right. Each person is most dear to themselves and to People hear this story and it's a little bit surprising. Some people don't have much capacity to love themselves or care for themselves or respect for themselves. Some people have received certain conditioning from their society or their religion or whatever that that puts them on tremendous makes them tremendously self sensitive to not being selfish. And anything that seems self centered to focus on oneself, one's own goodness, one's own happiness was on about being it's considered something to be pushed away or denied. I've known people who felt that they weren't really allowed to feel meditative joy. There was somehow a sin to feel that because there was selfish it was, you know, you're supposed

to just suffer and sacrifice. I don't know what exactly they believe in that religion. But, but but certainly the idea of being selfish focus on oneself for some people is very hard. But kind of the Assumption or that the premise in Buddhism is that it's possible to look upon oneself with deep kind regard with generosity of spirit looking at oneself as one and be and have a certain kind of love or friendliness or goodwill towards oneself. And because it's such a premise in Buddhism, the, the approach to developing cultivating loving kindness is usually done by starting and cultivating and towards oneself to strengthening the wish or the capacity for goodwill towards oneself. And then only then is it do we cultivate it towards other people. And part of the reason for that is that if you have a personal reference point, the physical direct feeling or sense or experience of goodwill towards yourself and even more so the capacity to feel happy and well and yourself peaceful, safe in yourself, then it's easier to have To know what you're wishing when you wish that for someone else, if you have no experience of safety, no experience or real happiness in yourself, no experience of loving yourself no experience of peace, really for yourself, then you might have some general abstract idea. It's a good idea for other people and you wish it for them. But it's a it's a very different than if you really, really know it for yourself and you can the capacity for empathy and imagine yourself in someone else's shoes so much stronger. And everything is easier than to kind of have a more deeper, more connected feeling of goodwill for someone else when you have that as a reference point. So that's the theory. That's the assumption. So classically, we start by doing loving kindness practice with oneself. And then as that as a foundation, we start doing a towards others. Now, it seems that there are enough people here in America, at least, for whom there's a rather rather problematic relationship they have with themselves and In the, you know, the, the most difficult person in their life is themselves. And there's a lot of, you know, the inner critic, self criticism, feeling of unworthiness inadequate in many ways. There's all kinds of neurotic complexes we have about attitudes towards ourselves, they get in the way of feeling this beautiful feeling of goodwill, a generosity of spirit towards year, we feel like we don't deserve it, we feel all kinds of things.

So when that's the case, then sometimes we start with someone else doing, touching into the feeling of goodwill towards other people, someone else who it's easy for, with the hope that we can then once we have established there and have a sense of it there, then at some point, we can bring it back to ourselves. We're a person just like anybody else, another person in the world. And we're just as deserving in a sense are worthy of wishing the best as anybody else. We want to wish The best for not to do it in a selfish way. Because selfishness in Buddhism, it's it's understood. You'll see this for yourself. If you do mindfulness practice, when you're selfish, you're contracted. When you're selfish, there's a suffering that's part of selfishness. There's a kind of tightening down or a kind of kind of obsessiveness that doesn't feel good. To really wish yourself well. You have to kind of relax or dissolve selfishness because you can't really be well if you're selfish. So it's not meant to be selfish, this kind of self love herself genuineness this way. But it's considered important. And so so as I've said number of times that it's classically in our tradition, when it begins the practice of cultivating goodwill, loving kindness, by doing it towards oneself. For many people that's difficult to challenge but it's well worth rising to the challenge and trying to find out how can how can you have it? Look upon yourself in such a way that you see yourself you hold yourself or you come forth out of yourself with feeling good about yourself or at least being generous towards yourself, as opposed to being critical or ungenerous towards yourself. So, the topic for the next little discussion I'd like you to have among yourself is, what are the ways? What are the appropriate healthy good, useful ways that you can have goodwill, loving kindness, generosity of generous attitude, and how you hold yourself? Can you have goodwill towards yourself? I mean, not not from the abstract. Oh, yes, you know, but you know, what, what, what, what are the ways in which you can or you already do look upon yourself and hold yourself generous generously, or whatever it take for you to do that. What are the conditions that support that allow that to happen? That's the topic. And it's not so much what you know some people gravitate so quickly to why it's difficult. So be a little bit guard yourself a little bit then as you do start this conversation you don't

kind of slide into all the reasons why it's hard to do this right it's hard to have goodwill or loving kindness or generosity towards yourself it's okay to touch on a little bit but don't get lost there. You know, stay focused and see explore and see what how is it that you can and what experiences in your life have you had of having goodwill towards yourself, when in your life have you had the most positive attitude towards yourself that was really meaningful that you had that and what you know you have a reference point like that at some point in your life. So that clear enough or gives you enough to get into and what I thought would be nice is that if you would do that with one other person, and have a conversation back and forth, make sure you have both talk the same number Want to make sure one person doesn't talk to the most that most of the talking, but it can be kind of a free conversation back and forth where you explore this for yourself, then okay. So maybe it'll be maybe about 10 minutes or so 1012 minutes or so perhaps that the two of you will have a chance to talk. So you have any questions about that. So and you might want to spread out a little bit so that you don't hear other people's conversation so you can stay focused on yours. So

so any comments, any would like to make any, anything you want to say bring up based on that exploration, that discussion and the issues come up questions, reports, surprises. Certainly was a lot of energy in here.

The interesting thing that arose in our conversation was how clear it became that metta toward ourselves was like a mirror image of metta toward that we have toward other difficult people.

Okay.

The interesting thing that came out for me was just to be able to identify when is it that I can give easily give

kindness, loving kindness or generosity towards myself and when is it that I can't? And it usually came down to some really and specific things like

when I'm feeling open hearted and generous is just open hearted for whatever reason, it's easier to give loving kindness and when I'm feeling closed down, I'm feeling shut down. It's hard to give loving kindness myself also saw that loving kindness towards myself comes more easily in situations that are emotionally strong or where I'm emotionally loaded, such as grief, or

where I'm a witness to something that's very powerful.

And it's nothing I can do except witness it. And but then I'm realizing this with practice that choice comes in those situations, I have a choice to start, you know, may I feel safe, may I be content, you know, so forth. So,

to see these these

differences,

beautiful Yeah.

I guess I noticed the difference. When I was listening to hearing the person talking about being generous with themselves compared to when I was listening to them, criticizing or analyzing

themselves how that felt for me, like I had some sense of joy, hearing this other person talk well of themselves and what they do. And the other side was like, like wanting them to see wanting him to kind of go back in that other direction and hold themselves and kindness, not ariya do you think this seems like a normal normal normal response normal response

I think the, as far as loving kindness for myself that Don Lemon was sure that's, you know what something I always strive to do and think I practice. But how do I know when I'm actually have accomplished that? Because just about everything I do is pretty much a good thing for myself for other people. But I think I learned that for me, it's like, I need to learn, to maybe feel, learn to feel maybe what the possibilities are when I'm loving and kind to myself, so there's some blank, emotional possibility there so I don't feel it. Like when I'm meditating on love, you know, it's hard for me to feel what love is I could, I might have to think back as my innocent self, then I could feel some compassion. But it's something I'm working on the feelings, the emotions. Otherwise, it's just an abstract thought, Oh, yeah, I'm loving and kind to myself.

Exactly, yes. Like

it's empty. So that's my I think. So I

think that that this is one of the hopefully results of something like meditation practices, our capacity to feel becomes bigger and we become more integrated and more holistic, where there's more than just thinking more or for people who feel too much more than just feeling going on. We can it becomes integrated in the different capacities. We have worked together harmoniously. And then we have a different reference point for all this. And I think that the kindness the love the goodwill can become much stronger than Mercia also more stable.

Because I don't have problems with the actual Of being loving, loving and kindness to myself is the feeling part that seems to be missing. Or is it? I don't know.

One of the ways to find out I mean, there's many ways of finding out but one of the ways to find out is to sit still in meditation for a long time. And it will become clear. Hi, everyone.

One thing that that became apparent to me with that something I've done a couple years ago that I thought was to affect other people. I thought it was sort of a clever thing. I had I'm gonna sign on my front door

that said,

please remove your shirts.

So people would come in the house and they take their shoes off. Because they assume that that's you know where to

point out No, no, this is your shirt

outside but

when we did this little exercise

it it suddenly dawned on me that I was really doing this

as a reminder to myself every time I came home

to me my shirts off, nice beautiful

in our talk, I was we were both realizing asked For what we want is a, of course, conditions. Some conditions are better than others for that, but more often I'm finding myself just just asking very simply for what I want as if, as if I'm worthy of at least asking. And, and the results have been very good. I mean, I'm celebrating it. And the other thing, Gil, what you said this morning is it really reverberating with me is it was something about giving space around whatever we're feeling so that so that we're not troubled by what the mind is doing. That seems really important for for my inner environment. Beautiful. Yeah. And I that's the challenge to which I hoped to rise because it's, it's not always easy. Um, you know, it seems subtle to allow that space around whatever is going on.

So that was one of the one of the things I said in the guided meditation was to do that make make the wareness really big and hold it. And the idea of an expansive mind or expansive awareness that can hold what's there, as opposed to fix it or change it or react to it. It makes life a lot easier. And so if you have making mind big enough, and sometimes ideas to make your mind so big, it's like as big as Redwood City, you know, the awareness. Sometimes you have making the biggest California to hold some things but you make an expanded sensitivity, almost almost some people almost by imagery expanded and then you're less claustrophobic, less caught by things. And there's more choice, more choice, more possibility of not being pushed around by it or seeing the wise way of going forward. It's a very useful thing.

I think her talking about removing your shoe shoe it before coming in that kind of led me

it was similar to what I talked about that

i think i was very critical toward myself and not as loving because I had all this shirt inside of me that once I kind of put down all those things expectation of that I couldn't read and so I was always critical when once I put that down I felt like I became so much freer and so much nicer to myself and kinda so I think some point when you learn to let go of all this rules and showed that you grew up with it's just life is so much freer either from Yeah, and kinda, you can be kind to yourself to others.

Yeah, sometimes it's a kind almost like ironic. a paradox that, you know, when you give up, you should be kind, then you'll be kinder. Okay, So one of the I think one of the really important things to explore in any project, I think probably of any religious tradition, spiritual tradition, but certainly in Buddhism is to fruit to get to explore get familiar with get wise about the relationship you have to yourself. And I think it's very easy to go through life and never question it or never even be aware of it or just take it for granted. It's like the, like, you know, like the thing about the fishes is supposed to see the water it swims in. We don't see the attitudes that we we've float in and we drown in towards ourselves. And as those are, they're operating all the time. And some of them are harmful and not useful, and not even accurate, and some can be quite beneficial, helpful. And, and the direction we're trying to go in Buddhism, one of the directions is towards being able to relate to oneself in a generous, open, relaxed, peaceful way. So that that relationship is one that's nurturing and supportive, as opposed to undermining. So it takes a long time to turn things around. But it starts by becoming Cognizant, becoming aware of what's better at it, what attitudes you carry about yourself. And as you become aware of it, if it's not good news, then

then a very important part of this is to relate, try to find a way to hold it likely. And don't let it pull you down even more, just realize that it's hard to be human, we get conditioned very powerfully and you don't, you don't have to take it personally what you do to yourself and just, you know, it's it's happening and now you'll work with it. Trying to find a wiser way. So that was the first half of our morning and loving kindness, our day and now the kindness and so we'll take a lunch break now and I thought we could start again in here at 130. So give us a little bit more than an hour. For those of you who are new to these days, if you brought lunch, we, we talk during lunch we hang out at lunchtime and people know how to do it will bring out tables, you can take some of the tables and tables and even take them outside and it's just nice to get the fresh air and the chairs as well as long as you bring them in at the end of lunch. And, and if you're relatively new to our community, you don't know anybody. I encourage you if you're inclined unless you want to be on your own. to just sit down with someone you know a group of people don't be shy. This most of the people who here are not the friendly people and And so just know, those of you who are from those friendly people you know, be friendly. But But, you know, just you know, please if you're new, introduce yourself or just be a little bit more step forward into people and say hello and so um so let's start again at 130. Thank you.

So let's start the afternoon with sitting. And I can start with a period of silence sitting together. And then I'll do some offer you some guided or reflected meditation near the end.

As we continue, I'd like to guide you in somewhat common practice of loving kindness. And it's often said that the common practice of loving kindness doesn't require you to feel any emotion of kindness or love or goodwill. But it relies on your wish or your intention that someone be well.

Feelings might arise which support the practice, but they're not required. The practice involves three different elements, primary elements. First is to bring someone to mind some person for whom you are going to have meta of goodwill, loving kindness. And then with whatever goodwill that you could generate or have, have. you express that with an intention that they be well and then you express that intention by using particular phrases that you repeat over and over again. So there's the person there's the intention And there are the phrases

and as you get your, your mind involves holding all three elements at the same time. The idea is to get concentrated are focused on this so you're not less likely distracted or caught up in thoughts but just get absorbed in just this activity of practicing loving kindness. So to begin with yourself, see if you can bring up an image of yourself or a sense of yourself. impression of yourself where you can relate to yourself with goodwill. sense of well wishing and kind regards generosity of spirit or yourself.

Some people find it helpful to tune in to the heart area. Maybe feel some gentleness or tenderness there as they feel themselves

and then see if you can find a wish or intention that you wish yourself well. You hope that you can be happy and read the goodwill you have expressed a wish I kind of wished well wishing it feels good to have you'll be wonderful if this person here happens to be me. Could be happy.

And then to give expression and strength or meaning to this intention. Repeat the following phrases silently to yourself. And as you say the phrases

you get to the end of each phrase, let it be kind of like you've opened the door opened a window to welcome in something something new. Maybe something connected to the phrase

silent they repeat these words may I be happy

May I be safe

May I be healthy?

May I be at ease?

May I be happy

May I be held? May I be safe?

May I be healthy?

May I be at ease

And as you say the phrases kind of sink into the meaning of the phrase in such a way that you let go of any other thoughts or reservations or you might have May I be happy?

May I be safe

May I be healthy

May I be at ease

and now bring to mind someone in your life. Someone you know for whom it's quite easy or relatively easy to feel friendship goodwill, well wishing and bring this person to mind. Hopefully someone for whom their relatively uncomplicated relationship where you're good with goodwill can be simple and straightforward.

can visualize the person or remember them or sense them

and if possible to see if you can, you know connect to your sense of goodwill or friendship towards them. Well wishing with the intention for their well being.

See if you can express your intention with these phrases and as you say the phrases, seeing if you can connect to a well wishing that feels satisfying to you meaningful to have this this generosity of spirit for this person

may you be May you be happy

May you be safe

May you be healthy

May you be at ease

trying to let go of any extra thoughts you have and connect to your love or friendship or goodwill for this person. As if your goodwill was radiating from you, opening up towards this person I think the words be like water that water is a seed May you be happy

May you be safe

May you be healthy

May you be at ease

And now take into mind that you're in a room here full of other people, people much like you and with your eyes closed, see if you can be open to including the people who are all around you somehow in the sphere, the orbit of your attention

As if awareness is a light bulb that shines in all directions with your awareness shine out or be about to the whole call directions in this room to all the people here.

See if you can

extend to radiate out your thoughts your wishes have be really good if these people here could all be happy, safe, healthy

as you as you repeat the following phrases that last Word of each phrase. Be like dropping a pebble in a pond. Let your awareness radiate out. That quality out into the room to the people here.

May all of you be happy.

May all of you be safe.

May all of you be healthy.

May all of you be at ease.

One more time, see if you can have sense of generosity or kindness or goodwill or well wishing for the people here in this room, do it in a way that feels meaningful or satisfying. Perhaps because your heart is open, your awareness is open, your body is relaxed.

Perhaps it's a delightful idea that these people could be happy Perhaps it's wonderful that there are people who can wish each other happiness may all of you be happy.

May all of you be safe.

Now all love you be healthy.

They all love you. Be at ease

Then the setting you can take a few long deep breaths.

So, in our particular Buddhist tradition, the two primary meditation practices that really the foundation, if at all, is mindfulness and loving kindness. And I had no idea that there was a practice of loving kindness practice of metta of goodwill, generating it to Woking and strengthening it until I came across this terrible tradition. And when I first came across it and I, they were guided meditations and loving kindness. I just tune the teachers out and I was not into it. Personally, I come from a Zen background and training and from releasing that way I kind of was trained to something like I just seemed too contrived and artificial. So I just have to leave to the teachers out until, and doing the Vipassana practice something inside of me my heart and were softened and relaxed. And then this upwelling of metta, or something that felt like metta, this love goodwill friendliness, kind of kind of rose out of the practice on its own. And then I had a reference point for what the teachers were talking about. And then I then I could then it was no longer making something artificial then it was doing the practice was tapping into something that I knew something I recognized. And I came to love the practice of beautiful practice, to to tap into our goodwill loving kindness and to let it kind of grow and Develop, it's quite something to watch, you kind of get stronger and stronger and grow. And that positive potential for letting it grow within us is really immense. It's the way that it grows is when it's similar to a concentration practice, where you do a concentration practice everything else you think about falls away, your life falls away, in a sense, and you're completely absorbed in this one thing that you're doing. And many people have that experience, you know, attending a hobby or reading a good book, you kind of get absorbed in the book. And so with loving kindness, you get absorbed in this whole world of, of metta as if nothing else kind of exists. It kind of fills you more and more. And, and so the sense of feeling and intention and attitude, kind of become stronger and stronger becomes like the primary kind of thing happening for you kind of because it's what stands out and highlights what stands out. You know, the foreground of your whole experience eventually And then when it gets really strong and you really kind of just that's, that's what your mind your heart Your body is all about, then it can come to this place where it feels that as if the, your, your meta is boundless, like it has no just radiates out in all directions, it has no limits has no boundaries, it's, it's kind of like some people can kind of get a sense of awareness being boundless. And they kind of relax and feel just beyond the edges of your body. It's kind of like you can't really feel there. So it's kind of a strange instruction. But you kind of kind of try to do that. And you get a sense that there's kind of a porous or this open boundaries, there's no hard line between your body and the world outside. And you get a sense that, you know, it's kind of arbitrary a little bit, too. For the mind to say or feel or that there's a sharp line between the body and the world outside. There's a kind of way in which becomes very solid Often diffused and kind of like, the awareness doesn't stop anywhere, it just goes on forever. So same thing with loving kindness, it can kind of feel like it's goes out and just pervades everything in this room, you're so absorbed in it. And it's a beautiful, beautiful thing to experience. And you can sometimes like, there are people who specialize especially in like in Thailand. And doing this loving kindness practice is the primary practice. And sometimes you're in their presence, you get this sense that there's a kind of a field of metta or goodwill or something loving kindness just kind of emanating from them. It's, you know, just kind of feels kind of cool. To be around someone who that's the kind of way of being in the world is to just have you know, this generosity of spirit you just kind of kind regard this goodwill to whoever comes into their orbit. very different than if you go you know many places in our society and you don't expect you know that persons can be relaxed and open and necessary. They automatically friendly but but

so it's a practice. And so some people find it very meaningful to do this as an ongoing regular meditation practice and develop this capacity. For some people, it's a slow, slow learn, you know, takes a while to get into it, and some people take to take to it right away. It's said to be very helpful for doing mindfulness practice, because it creates a feeling an attitude of friendliness, or, or generosity or something. For the difficulties that happen in mindfulness, it's easier to be mindful, if you're friendly attitude towards your experience into yourself. If you're unfriendly, you know, it's kind of like a drag to

be sitting there. So some people find that doing this loving kindness, some people do it 10 minutes, five minutes in a couple of minutes at the beginning of every meditation session, kind of set a little bit of a set a good attitude, as you start little bit to whatever can be done some People make it their primary practice. So I'm wondering among you here, how many of you have done loving kindness practice before? So quite a few of you. So a few, a few see how many people haven't done it before. So just a few. So what I'd like to have us do now is I would like to have groups of four again, that could maybe be some groups of five, for groups or for entity discuss what your experience and relationship has been to doing this loving kindness meditation, what's your attitude towards it? What's your take on it, what's your experience of doing it? And, and, and just kind of explore that kind of share that with each other and have a conversation about it. And for those Have you haven't done it at all, which is fine. Make sure there's only one of you. In a group, I don't know where you're all sitting. But I would like all of you to sit together. But make sure that you're the only representative of the people who are there. So this is new, and listens to the other people who say, and when it's your turn to share goes around the circle and comes to you. Since you haven't done it, you haven't had much to say about what it's like to do it. But talk about what your take on this is or what it was like to do it this last half hour or just that you do and what your attitude what your relationship to it was just from this one little experience right now and what do you think about this? How does it strike you now that you've been introduced to it this way? How's that sound set seem clear enough? Yes, please.

I can The The, the classic instruction in that ancient texts going back thousands of years is you shouldn't do it to someone who's dead. And you should also not do it to someone who you might be romantically attracted. B. Because in both, but both for the dead and for the romantic objects, it can get complicated, I think for different reasons, but

and the idea was to keep it really simple and straightforward. So and then get yours with people who are dead that can be mixed up, we can cause grief and all kinds of other things. But I know plenty of people who found it very nice to do it towards people who passed away and find very meaningful to do it. The primary one of the guidelines around doing loving kindness practice it helps some people is don't get caught up in the any kind of thoughts about that you're doing it for their sake. You know, and how is it? How is it? How does it get to them? And, you know, and they don't deserve it or, you know, or, you know, we're you know, you know, whatever. It's not free to think of it more of sphere sake. You know, it's good for the world, but not necessarily directly for them, but it's good. Is it a good thing for you to do? Because he's really opening your heart not closed. So is that okay, anything else, you know? So, groups of four, maybe they'll be few groups of five depending on numbers here. And then have your discussion about loving kindness meditation, your relationship to it.

So

sometimes, the practice of loving kindness is treated as kind of like kindergarten Buddhism. And so you know, it's it's, you know, And some people have the attitude that, yeah, of course, it's a really good thing to do. But you know, it's really the kind of preliminary stuff. It's not the real juicy important thing in Buddhism, you know, important thing is liberation or seeing directly into the truth or awakening, whatever that is. But you know, it's loving kindness. Yeah, it's okay. And you find that attitude sometimes explicit that I've, even in Thailand amongst some of them, nastic teachers, they sometimes they actually say that this is kind of like, you know, kind of a little bit like a less just like lesser practice is good, but it's not really the real stuff. There are other teachers who really hold it up very highly, of course, but you do find this attitude sometimes. And if you go back and read the sutras, teachings of the Buddha, it seems that there that loving kindness has held up very, very highly It seems that that loving kindness is seen loving kindness and the other four kinds of love, compassion, sympathetic joy

and equanimity, are seen as the practice and develop. It's like you did in this meditation practice. If you do it well, that it's a path to liberation itself, it's a path awakening itself. It's not like a lesser thing you do until you get around to the real stuff. Now, this is a very, you know, is is very respected or seen as a very valid path to freedom itself the path through love itself. And so here's one little example of this from the Buddha and begins with a visual kind of visualization imagination so if you're able to imagine along and be helps imagine that there is an easily accessed pond with clear delightful refreshingly cool water. If a tired, parched and thirsty person torched and exhausted by hot weather came across this pond. The water would be used to quench both the person's thirst and the hot weather fever. It is the same for a person who after learning the Buddhist teachings, cultivates loving kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity. From this, the person gains inner peace because of this inner peace, cultivate cultivates what's appropriate for a practitioner. It's beautiful. So there they are, this is a path to peace itself, practicing these things. And it's not always easy. So one of the things I described earlier as you start to practice always with where it's easiest, the principle that is important remembers, you start where it's easiest. If it's easiest for yourself, start there is easier someone else start with the other person. And then the idea is To take where the love or the kindness is easiest. And then from there universalize it, start the process of spreading it out. So if you start saving, start with yourself, because supposed to be the easiest, then the next easiest would be what's called a benefactor. someone, someone who's had your best wishes in their mind. And that's helped you out to support you a teacher, someone. And benefactor is also someone who's mostly been in that role as a benefactor. So maybe the relationship is not complicated. Other things like a friend might be complicated, you might have a lot of love for a friend, but there was a time and so you use self then benefactor, and then a friend. And then from there, you go to a neutral person. And then from there you do go difficult person. And the idea is not so much like step by step, but more like this gradation from where it's easiest. And then you don't deny the love that you feel close to close at hand. But you take that same love and allow it to be there, but you expand it and include more more people within it that goodwill. So eventually the whole world in at least in an attitude of generous, generous goodwill towards everyone.

But, but it gets very interesting when you start getting into where it's difficult to difficult people. And that's where some really deep inner work has to happen, perhaps, where we have to kind of confront why it's different, why that person is difficult. Is their history. Is there pain? Is there anger is there. Do they represent something for you? What is it about that person, that it was not possible to somehow open your heart in a generous way to that person as well. And so that might take a lot of, you know, soul searching and reflection and debate and struggle with your own stuff. Before you can kind of come to some place where you can feel goodwill to that difficult person as well. Well, in the 1000 or so years ago, there was a big meditation manual, published written in Theravada Buddhism called the path of purification. And that's kind of like a part of the primary meditation manuals for this tradition. And in that book, there's a huge chapter on cultivating loving kindness. And they talk, they talk about the practice, lay it all out there. But in this chapter is a big chapter. I don't know what percentage of the chapter but a great majority of the chapter has to do with overcoming anger. And I thought that's kind of interesting. And, and one of the ways I interpret that is that in Buddhism, there's a lot of ideals. And rather than going after the ideal directly, we often try to understand what gets in the way of the ideal. So if the idea is to be happy, loving kindness or compassion, it's very Very valuable to actually investigate what the what blocks you're in, you're compassionate, you're loving kindness, and then work through that, rather than overriding it or ignoring it or pretending it's not there. Because if you can work through it, then whatever is left in the heart will be kind of more natural or more easier than not can be less and less contrived. It's also I think, very respectful, because maybe the ideal is not what you're supposed to feel. But once you clear out, clear everything out, clear the anger out, for example, then the heart has a chance to respond in a way that's appropriate. And rather than your impose thinking you're supposed to be kind, maybe that situation you're supposed to be compassionate. Or maybe in that situation, you're

supposed to be generous or patient or maybe that situation, you know, some other kind of response is called for. And so there's no so the cultivation of loving kindness is a great practice. But it's not meant to be to ignore the difficult work of dealing with the, you know, the anger, the resentments, fears that might be operating as well. Those also have to be addressed directly. So, do you have any comments or questions about this practice of loving kindness are coming out of your discussion or out of someplace else? Yes. If you can use the mic up, baby, we appreciate it. I'll be here. Gail.

Just a question from the traditional sequence yourself a benefactor a friend.

I always think of family after myself. I go to family. And I'm just thinking you think it's said that way because it was a monastic practice from the time of the Buddha and they just didn't

seem to have family. I don't know the answer to that question. But I so I was important. there's not there's not a particular sequence we find useful to have those categories, and then plug in family as it fits. But But the idea, the idea is the principle of going from what's easiest, or it's hardest to kind of a, it's a kind of a gradual process. So you have to decide who's next. So if your family is right, in the beginning, that's fine. And but, you know, you know, Uncle Charlie, you know, he gets to go right near the end of the line, or something. So you have to decide where you know if that's a label for you. Again, the the, again, part of the principle of the practice of meditation practice, is, I think it's, I think it's helpful to keep coming back to the reference point that you're doing for yourself. So you don't have to do you're not obligated to do every possible person in the world and your whole family and everybody's, you know, include everyone. You just do it, do it to those people that helps you to expand outwards, and it's fine to leapfrog over people as long as As your you know, they just fit that category and select someone else, you know, took care of that expansion of your heart. And now you want to go to the next expansion. The next one since I do notice are people who approach the whole loving kindness practice from a sense of obligation and duty and like

sort of learning a lot, because I think I was under the impression about this ideal and you could just repeat these phrases over and over again to myself like something would happen.

You might get angry. Well, something will happen.

But it wasn't it wasn't the thing that I was expecting to be filled with a warm fuzzy feelings for somebody. So it does help to hear that maybe with certain people. What you arrive at is the best that you can do is to be patient with them. Yeah, yeah that you won't ever, perhaps have those warm feelings towards them. So that that's if I've got that, right, that's very helpful.

It might be the primary thing has to act on you to act on your patients rather than something else. But hopefully, that hopefully, hopefully eventually you thought you come to some goodwill towards them, or capacity for it. But yesterday in the moment, a different response might be needed, then then goodwill.

And then I found myself thinking because I think many of us that come here are people with a lot of compassion. And that compassion when you have no ability to do anything is sometimes difficult to tolerate. And that expanding loving kindness, I was just wondering, what how that would affect feeling compassionate and yet, at the same time, not being in a position to do anything about it with that, would that be a pain? I can't describe it it would that be a painful edge to

loving kindness work?

make any sense?

Well, I think if I understand you so if you feel compassion for someone who you can't help and they're in pain, isn't that difficult? What do you do something like

yes and when you when you talk about expanding to greater and greater numbers of people, right and then I'm now I'm compassionate to people in India who are suffering and suffering on, you know, really isn't much sure if anything, so this

is so so, you know, there's maybe many answers to your question. So I can just speak for myself that when I'm when I'm doing loving kindness to specific people who are suffering a lot, then then you know, I might not I might, I might not include them or do them. In my loving kindness, they're included in the compassion work. So it's compassionate, more appropriate. There's a whole compassion practices just like this one here, like loving kindness practice. So they would get by compassion of my loving kindness. If if I'm doing India then for me speaking for myself, then it becomes so generalized. It's kind of like, you know, like I do all beings, you know, everyone in California, everyone, you know, and for me when everyone in California I don't think about the millions of people in California are suffering. To me. It's kind of like an idealized maybe, but a generalized kind of just blanket kind of thing, where the point is not the people. I don't focus so much on the people actually, but more on the broadness and extensiveness of the kindness. It's kind of like I'm covering that whole territory, and the boundless open quality and feeling it's And the kind of sense of boundary or separation that can sometimes operate almost subconsciously falls away and it just kind of just great big, boundless open feeling so that I don't get into specifics about people. They're just like this. All of you then when I'm doing all the California just like you, you're just all generic people.

So you mentioned compassion, practice and loving kindness practice. Can you say something about the distinction and the times that

so loving kindness practice is more like wishing people I see it as just wishing them well and being just generally is wishing not to be happy, happy and safe and have a good life and all that compassion is when you see that the specifically they're suffering, and then you wish for the alleviation that suffering you wish they don't suffer. I don't know if this is a good analogy, but analogy is given in the ancient texts is that have parents who have like four kids and are four stages kids lives so when they when the baby was just born there tends to be all this wishing them well hoping their good future and all this goodwill you know because they're just a blank slate you don't know what's going to happen so you wish them well and then when they're and then in does it work and then one of them is kind of one of the children is kind of sick sickly and so the parents then have all this compassion care for the sick child and then you have the child who is just starting left home and starting work and it's you know, a family and it's all going well so you feel a sympathetic joy for themselves you know, they grow up and launched then you have the one who's like in their 40s or something the kids they're you know, they're everything's established that job is established, to take care of and, and use feel equanimity isn't you know, you don't Isn't it lady that they finally made it? And you're not? Don't think they're suffering. So in different circumstances, you have different ways in which that response to that poll is. And so compassion is a particular response to make some sense.

So some people when they do loving kindness meditation, find that it it, rather than making them feel more loving, it makes them feel something like the opposite. And it kind of works a little bit as a purification practice. So as you do this, sometimes it highlights or stirs up some of the deeper issues that need to be addressed. If the resentments, the angers, the frustrations, the fears, and so sometimes

it can get quite strong. And so that has to stand to be addressed. And some people will continue doing loving kindness for those feelings in spite of them and continue kind of through them. But some people find it very helpful when there's very strong so called negative feelings come up, is to stop doing loving kindness, practice and switch over to mindfulness. Until that until those are settled. And then you continue with loving kindness. Yes, can.

I just finished a retreat on Wednesday, and we had been out of touch for nine days. And so at the end of the retreat, the teachers said, Well, we wanted to tell you a couple things that have happened in the world. You know, we want to just let you know, so it's not such an impact when you come out and one of the things that they mentioned was that Osama bin Laden had been found and killed. And so there was a it was said very nicely and that, you know, the teacher explaining this said, Well, we just want to let you know also that Generally the you know, the body had been treated with respect and it was, you know, resolved fairly okay. And the man sitting next to me, immediately sort of a spontaneous response under his breath said, Good, good. I thought that was a really beautiful response is that his first sense was, Oh, this, this person should have been treated with respect and was happy about that.

So I hope that was useful for you to have the conversations with loving kindness. It's like it's a good one to explore and maybe hear each other and hear each other's experience in relationship to it. And I hope that made it makes them more rich and hopefully more interesting. It's an it's a valuable practice to to begin to learn It's something that can be done in many circumstances in life. And, you know, one of the things that makes compassion, for example, hard to do is when you feel like you're helpless, and you can't do anything. But some people find that having an inner practice, whether it's mindfulness or compassion, practice, or loving kindness practice, always gives you something to do. So even if even if you can't help out there, you can still do something you don't just kind of like, give up and you know, and I think I believe that doing these kinds of practices is very effective for the world very effective in these kinds of circumstances as well. So it gives us kind of overcomes whitewave overcoming helplessness, even if they can't do anything externally. And I've known several people who have gone been wheeled into operation rooms to have surgery and they're there waiting in the hallway waiting to go in. And one person was most Point instead, I have got too many surgeries. And usually I'm laying there feeling helpless. I'm in the hands of someone else. And I'm just waiting. But now that I noticed loving kindness practice, I feel like I'm in charge, you know that there's something I can do. And I have a role I have something, you know, some way. So it can be it's something you'd be done in many circumstances. And I find it fascinating to do at airports. You know, there's a lot of things you could do at airports. I don't know what you do at airports. But if I'm alone in airports, you sit sitting there in a lot, you know, those lounges waiting for the plane and, and kind of people watch, you know, quietly or secretly or something and, and may you be happy, may you be happy. And what happened helps because often people not smiling as much at airports, is, as I imagined what they would look like they were smiling if they're home, you know, and it's a nice circumstance with their family or you know, something Something and I imagine then It's so yummy. It made me so. And now sometimes I find it very nice thing to do, not only because it's nice to do itself, because knowing my own mind, sometimes the alternatives are not so favorable. You know, it's sitting there and you know, what am I? So? Okay, so let's take a short break. Can we do this? Can we start again in here at 10 after three because we're running out of time now for the last little section, thank you. Sometimes there are mutual or there's they're separate, but they're interactive and mutually supportive or work together. And one that some people separate out as being somehow opposed, is the idea of helping oneself versus helping others. If you help yourself you're selfish, you should go and be helping others is sometimes when In the dramatic ways I saw my early years of Buddhist practice was, I haven't heard it for many years now. But parents are friends of people who are doing Buddhist practice or people are meditating would tell them that they're being selfish. You know, being self absorbed just sitting there meditating and focusing

yourself. And they would say explicitly, you should be out there and do help the world. But, you know, they're spending maybe, I don't know, an hour, two hours a day meditating, right? The people are criticizing them or spending three or four hours a day on watching television. And if you'd said, You know, I watch television every day, you know, so Okay, that's, you know, that's normal. Or if you said you spend a few hours a day stamp collecting Well, that's okay. But if you say you spend a couple of hours an hour meditating, that evokes something in some people, that it's spiritual, somehow it's religious, and if you must be religious, spiritual, then you have to be only four. Help others only something compassionate if it's focused on yourself, then it's selfish. So I don't know if I conveyed that properly, but there's kind of a fount of weird kind of kind of view. And, and,

but as I, as I understand the teachings of the Buddha, it's clear that there's a mutuality, that if you help yourself at the same time, you're helping others. If you're helping others, it's meant to be healthy yourself as well. It was kind of the two You don't have to be opposed to each other, they can work together. And one of the places you can see that as an the practice of loving kindness, and the practice of compassion, is that, you know, on one hand, loving kindness is wishing someone else well. It's being generous and supportive of other people. And the same time it's understood as you do that, you benefit from that. And it's okay to want to benefit from that it's not selfish. These two things Things can go together. It's not they don't exclude each other. And in fact, this the personal benefits you can get from the practice of loving kindness is one of the motivations to do it. But the byproduct then is you end up being a more some kind of person who goes into the world, able to help the world more and more motivated to help the world to make some sense. And so in the handout for, I have two handouts for today. One is a series of quotes about loving kindness. And in there you'll see a list of the 11 benefits of loving kindness. And people who do a lot of loving kindness practice are sometimes instructed to memorize those 11 benefits. And somehow, if they're close at hand by having memorized them, it kind of acts as a little fuel for the we're doing the practice.

But my hope is that people who practice loving kindness Don't just do it in the privacy of their own minds, that it does translate into acts of loving kindness acts of goodness or kindness acts of caring for others as well. And, but then in the same way, if you there are ways in which you can do something for someone else, and the very doing of it helps you develop more of your own loving kindness or your own more of your own compassion. Even if you don't feel like you want it even if you don't feel kind, or friendly, or you know, appealed goodwill to someone. If sometimes if you just break out of your bubble and go do something for them, and doing them and helping them you'll start sometimes feel changed by that and feel better. It's okay to feel better. It's okay to get benefits. You're not supposed to be the martyr, who is supposed to go and out of a sense tremendous sense of duty and responsibility. Ask yourself, doing good and helping other people. It's a mutual, it's a mutual benefit society that Buddhism is. And we all benefit together. And what they say in Buddhism, which I believe is that, the more you're benefited, the more you're grow and develop and mature spiritually, the more you have to offer other people and in the quality of what you offer so much more improved than and then if you hadn't done that practice. So what are the so if you're, if you're inspired, or it's meaningful for you, the idea of cultivating more loving kindness, more goodwill, that it's not something you're going to leave to chance and let it happen whenever it happens, but actually try to find a way that you can sincerely bring it up more often making more part of your life, then we'll look for ways to do that. And one of the ways to do it certainly is to do a regular loving kindness practice. in other ways, another way of doing it is to there are certain things you can do that tend to have the side effect is byproduct of kind of opening the heart or byproduct of encouraging more goodwill coming from you. So I wanted to ask you all what are the what are the things that you can think of doing, actually doing in the world, not just sitting not privately in your own mind? What are the things you could actually do? That in the doing of that it might generate or evoke stronger feelings of goodwill, compassion or friendliness towards others? What do you think?

Susan?

I think sometimes just smiling at people and You know, being friendly.

So just smiling basic, friendly gestures knowing that

there exist, exist

I've noticed that sometimes if I mean supermarket kind of grumpy, you know, I get to the clerk and you know, you know, just continuing my grumpy mood is not going to help me any. But if I take the time to stop and take in the fact just even though even though it's smiling, we just take in the fact there's a person there and let the person register in my field. I call there's a real person there. Even if they don't look at me, but you're really taken, then I'm much more likely to feel kindly disposed to that person. Smiling even better. So someone else, yes, in the front.

I've noticed there are a lot of small opportunities that that come along and therefore like being courteous to people, or like yielding right of way or letting someone else do what they're trying to do when they're in a little bit of temporary conflict with your philosophy.

Also, sometimes people just need a little bit of help with something and if you offer to do that, or just step in and do it, that all those things really cultivated

savings, a lot of small, small little gestures of courtesy can help do it just just doing the gesture, bounces back, the changes your little bit, and doing things for people. Thank you.

Like you said that those small acts

sometimes it's almost sad and shocking to me that if I when I see an opportunity Be like, oh, somebody with the baby carriage needs help with adored, you know, those kinds of simple things. Sometimes they're so shocked and emotional that they're getting spontaneous help. You know, it's a little sad that that's such a big deal. You know, and that, of course that makes that evokes emotion in me like,

Oh, you're welcome, you know,

not a problem and, but I guess the world can use more of that.

So another space a lot of these small gestures of support. There's also big gestures that you can do to strangers even. You know, that that doesn't have to be small ones makes a big difference. Take give people a ride for out of your way to you know, help someone out someone else

I like to just let people know that I appreciate them. Oh something that they've done or recognized something that you know is kind of compassionate that they've done because I think that it seems like people don't get recognized for this small

acts so expressions over the thank you and appreciation.

I would like to recognize you for going out of your way to help me beautiful

Yeah. Now so it's a beautiful and when you do that, does that tend to evoke more goodwill from within you?

With me? Of course

yes. For for them. So you by saying thank you for saying I appreciate it. that generates more goodwill.

Yeah, it's like a positive beautiful

I think there's a lot of volunteer opportunities

that that would

support this.

Visiting in jails or helping in

nursing homes or after school.

There's just a lot of

boundless

opportunity. So yes, and part of the advantage of that is not only helping someone but also seeing people that in circumstances in life that are heart opening to to move us in some deep way. If we only stay home and watch, I don't know why I don't watch television. But you know, you know, people can limit themselves and see a very small subsection of society and it doesn't, doesn't open the hardest matches, scoring situations like that.

Think one time. Well, for a long time, I used to be annoyed it was he would get easily annoyed at people because of the shirts. Like if I went to McDonald's and the person had a hard time speaking English, they had a lot of judgment and frustration about us, I would be angry at that person, then I would end up feeling guilty about it. So I taught myself Well, that doesn't do anybody any good. Especially if I if I actually showed my anger, which hopefully I didn't, and I and I don't want to have that guilt. So once a while, what I would do about it was I would intentionally tip these people like through drive in and, and I noticed that you know, they're really, like, really happy and amazed and in disbelief. And, and it makes me feel good. So it's like, I intentionally go into my stuff. To try to do something

so you felt you felt annoyed these people are helping you in some way and there were circumstances where it was okay to tip them. Okay enough and so you would tip them over you're saying right and even though wasn't really your you know and somebody's doing that tipping it broke you're broke your transit broke you're broke you out of your state of mind

right about it about

you say they would smile they'd be really happy and then it was hard for you to be angry anymore.

Right yeah then after that, but now you know after that it doesn't matter if they didn't speak perfect English when they're trying to help.

Save me a lot of money.

is little thing. Beautiful.

There is a there is many years ago I read about a tribe somewhere in the Philippines. I think it was where if you had a dream, where someone was in your dream, but they were kind of causing you trouble in the dream. Then when you woke up the next day, you Article give them a gift to the idea of giving gifts to the people who are troublesome for you. So even similar idea to what you said,

I think it's important for us to in our society, there's a lot of people that are in the service industry, that they're kind of considered a non person. So I make a special effort to acknowledge them. So it might be as simple thing as at a checkup check Stan looking at their name and saying their name and making eye contact instead of the hour you without contact just right. So I tried to do a little simple thing like that. That's the least I could do like that.

Great. Okay, so. So thank you. And so the idea being that number of ideas, but one idea that if you want to generate more loving kindness, then there's also things you can do to create the conditions that tend to evoke it. It might be hard to generate it in and of itself, but you can do so. Certain things that makes it more likely that it'll come forth and you're gonna have just wait to it just happens. And, and then as you keep doing those things, you feel more and then it becomes easier and easier to do and becomes more part of your life. It's a beautiful thing to be have more goodwill and kindness in your life. And it doesn't have to be warm and fuzzy. It doesn't that not at all goodwill can be very strong and balanced and, and you know, you, you can be true to yourself and that, yes.

I don't know that I intended this, to have that this consequence, but I'm fortunate enough to have traveled a lot. And I think that getting out of your own environment into other environments that are difficult and different from your own does a lot For opening up my perspective and compassion and understanding that my way is not the highway.

Great. It's been my experience too. So. So thank you very much. It's a it's a, I appreciate the fact that I could spend these six hours with you talking about loving kindness and exploring it with you with a group of people. It's kind of seems like a pretty special thing to have to pay people to do such a thing. So I appreciate it very much. Thank you. And next month, I don't know the date anymore. But so in June, we'll do the last of these series for the year. And we'll do equanimity as the topic. And though I've already mentioned earlier, so usually for those who don't know, I usually do this together with Inez Friedman. And now it's the second time in a row. She hasn't been here. And this time, she wasn't Hear because she never planned to be here on this time. When I invited her to teach it with me, she said, Yeah, I'll come but I can't come in May. So this is the deal. But the last time she wasn't here because of this, you know, the use permit the hearing public hearing that to happen. So there's handouts here to handouts if you'd like one with reflections and exercises to do during the month. And it's always helpful if there abouts six, seven people stay behind to do the tidying up. We have to do the kitchen and vacuuming in here. And Gail is the manager. So there's six, seven people who like to stay behind for about 10 minutes and help with that. So 123456 Great, thank you, Dr. Gail. And so may whatever benefit that you received from this day of practice, may you consider how you can turn that into ways of benefiting others as well. May whatever benefit and merit has come from this day before the welfare and happiness and liberation of all beings everywhere. May all beings be happy. Thank you