

Guided Meditation: Love Close to Love Far

Gil Fronsdal

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Hello, welcome to this meditation session.

And to maybe set the stage is to read a poem from the Buddha from a collection called the *Udāna*, ancient texts. And it goes like this. If you searched in all directions throughout the world, you would find no one more dear than yourself. Since each person is most dear to themselves, those who love themselves should not harm anyone. So the idea is there's something about being alive as a human being that for each individual person to search for someone dear, more valuable, more to be loved than oneself, you won't find it. But the consequence of that is a kind of love for others.

And because if you love yourself in this way, care for yourself, and understand others' people see themselves as so dear, then we treat everyone as dear, and we don't want to harm anyone. Right? And how do we see that we don't find anyone dear than ourselves? And that is because the person that we're closest to is ourselves. And if our love is going to be universal, we want to start close in to ourselves. Sometimes that's where it's most difficult, but it's most worthwhile because it gives us the foundation, an incredibly important foundation, to not harm others.

And an example of that is Martin Luther King, who had a message of love, a message of non-harming. The two came hand in hand for him, and he changed the world. He changed this country, rooted in those two things. So this love is not necessarily selfish. In fact, to be selfish is to diminish that wonderful mettā, this wonderful goodwill. So starting with what's closest.

So assuming a meditation posture and spending a little bit of time, maybe adjusting yourself, maybe rocking forward and back, going slower and finding a midpoint to balance, maybe stretching side to side, kind of a little ritual of kind of a rolling, making a big circle, kind of

getting into your body, getting connected a little bit more. And maybe there's some way of being more fully connected to your body without any strain or stress for sitting up a little bit straighter. So there's a little bit more chi, a little more energy of alertness, aliveness here in this body. Some people find it helpful to kind of let the back of the neck and where the spine goes into the skull, so kind of imagine that you're that's leaning back to rest maybe on a pillow behind you. So it's kind of good. The head gets maybe a quarter inch, a little bit, just gets pulled back a little bit.

And right there, the space between the last vertebrae and the skull to tip the head slightly and lift the head to create more space. Gently close your eyes. And if you are going to search the world for who is most dear, but the search is not through your thoughts, not through your eyes, but through a certain warmth and tenderness in your heart, a gentleness, you first want to attune yourself, first want to adjust yourself so that that wonderful capacity of the heart to feel and to sense is turned on, is bigger, is bigger. So gently closing the eyes, then feeling or allowing the expansion and contraction, the lifting and falling of the chest and the belly, the sensations of breathing in and breathing out. To feel it close to the heart center, close to that place within where there is a kind of predisposition to kindness, to gentleness, even if you don't feel it right now. Bring your attention to the place within, where you would feel it if you did.

And breathe there, breathe through it, breathe with it. And then very softly, maybe on the inhale, maybe on the exhale, softly as a whisper, as dropping a pebble in a pond. Say a word that you have that evokes *mettā*, kindness, friendliness. Say it gently and as you say it, let it be received in the kindness center, in the place of generosity, kindness, your own goodness, taking a few long, slow deep breaths into this place around it and relaxing as you exhale, letting your breathing return to normal. And as you breathe, as you sit here, recognize that the person that you're most close to, most physically intimate to, is yourself. And to develop that universal capacity for kindness, friendliness for all beings.

We start with ourselves, or not even the idea of ourselves, but just the idea that this living being here, the one you're closest to, a love, a kindness that doesn't need any reason. It's just the goodness of the heart that's inside, the warmth, the gentleness, that of course it comes and touches you first, because you're right here. And of course it starts here, because only then can it be extended in a balanced, open way, in all directions for all people, very gently, with every cycle of breath, verbally or non-verbally. Remind your heart about kindness, goodwill, *mettā* with every reminder, letting go of your thoughts and settling further into that place of kindness, radiating kindness. One word that I associate with love, with *mettā*,

is the word yes, a gentle, kind way of saying yes, yes to love, to kindness, yes, that brings a smile, maybe a smile to the lips, maybe a smile to the heart, a smile and a yes that quiets and reassures the anxious mind.

And as we come to the end of this sitting, to consider that one of the great powers of this life of ours is the power of kindness, the power of *mettā* and goodwill. And if we can be deeply settled and reassured in ourselves by filling ourselves with our own goodwill, our own generosity, our own care and love, then there's a foundation from which to understand others that they too are precious. They too have a capacity for generosity, kindness, care. And too, the power of kindness is when we can demonstrate it so it awakens in others. So we resonate with others, and it spreads outward into the world, not as an act of aggression, but like the warmth of the spring that slowly and steadily comes.

May our capacity to be warm-hearted, kind, be like a radiance, a golden light, a glow that flows and fills ourselves. Every cell of our body becomes like an antenna that radiates outwards where we wish well to all beings. May all beings be happy. May all beings be safe. May all beings be peaceful. May all beings be free. Thank you.