

Guided Meditation: Silent Love

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So, welcome. And today I can welcome you to the Insight Retreat Center in Santa Cruz. It's IMC's residential retreat center. And I'm here for a two-day training that we're doing. And I'm happy to be here and... I know you don't see much except a different Buddha and a different wall, but it's very nice to share the place with you and be here. And some of you have been here, so maybe you're a little bit familiar.

So in practicing with the love of *mettā*, I think it's invaluable to have some sense of what silent love is like. A love that is silent, meaning a love which is not requiring a lot of words to talk ourselves into love or say how good it is to love. A silence that is not full of what we should do and shouldn't do and why it's difficult or how it should be better. It's kind of a silence that allows us to hear better, to recognize better, to understand, become attuned to the subtleties of what's going on. So if we're with other people, we're not caught in our own chatter. Our chatter is quiet, so our eyes, our ears, our senses can become more attuned to the subtle expressions that the people are making.

Can we read behind their words? Can we feel them more, their emotions, their humanity? And the same thing with ourselves. Can you be silent enough and sense yourself in a silent way? To observe yourself with the mind's eye in a kind of a silent way that doesn't involve chatter, doesn't involve a lot of shoulds, doesn't involve being caught in the expectations, but is more generous to just hear, listen, just sense and feel for the subtlety, for the emotional subtlety, for the existential subtlety, so that when we're with ourselves, we're able to tune in and be present for all the little nuances or all the things we tend to overlook about ourselves, that we're willing to sense and feel ourselves more fully as we are, not through the lens of all our thoughts and ideas and memories and predictions of the future.

So it allows some kind of inner silence, not because we're being silenced in a negative way, but rather we're opening up to a fuller experience of ourselves that allows for a deeper care,

deeper empathy, deeper understanding, a kind of a silent attention that in and of itself expresses care. Care expresses kindness. And if we can do that with ourselves, because we're closest, the more we can do it ourselves and really understand ourselves well and care for ourselves well in this kind of loving silence, then we'll know how to bring more of ourselves to be sensitive, to be attuned, to be connected to others, to be able to see and feel others, the capacity of feeling empathy. So that's what we'll sit with today. A silent love. And maybe some of the most universal or sweetest or generous forms of love has this kind of silence to it, a certain kind of inner silence.

So to assume a meditation posture and to gently begin the silent sensing. By silently sensing your body. And gently, from the head down to the toes, silently scan your body to feel the subtlety of how it is. And if it's easy and obvious, make some small adjustments in your posture as a way to kind of quietly, silently sense, feel your body more fully. Take some slow, gentle, fuller breaths. And as your torso expands, feeling it, sensing it.

And on the exhale, feel the return, the settling in your torso. And letting your breathing return to normal. And to spend some time sensing and feeling your breathing with a silent awareness, a quietness of attention, of sensing, so you're sensing and seeing directly, and not so much through the filter of your thoughts and ideas and shoulds and feeling and sensing. The kind of sensitivity of silent knowing. When there's a kind of silence from the chatter, from the static, is there in this sensing, the knowing, the awareness, some kind of tenderness or caring, perhaps even forgiveness, that knows caringly, knows tenderly.

And in that more quiet, silent knowing, that maybe has a heightened sensitivity, might there be also a silent love, love that has no fireworks. It's not dramatic, but a gentle kind of love or empathy or care, quiet tenderness, a gentleness in the knowing itself that has as part of it a kind of love or goodwill, a caring receptivity. And let that silent love glow, radiate like a warmth or light throughout your body so that you're the recipient. All the different things you feel and sense and the ways you are is touched by this quiet, silent love.

When the mind is quieter or when we can feel our way into the place inside where there's a quiet awareness, a more silent awareness, where we sense and see and feel whatever is there without interfering with it, without needing it to be different, where that silent awareness, quiet awareness, has a kind of sensitivity associated with love, a love that is expressed in wanting to know, wanting to be present, wanting what's there to allow it to be there in a gaze of kindness, so that awareness and love are not separate. Love and awareness is not separate, not two things. And then allow that radiance, that silent, silent love, silent awareness to open up out into the room you're in, out into the space around you, as if you're receptive or ready

to love, ready to care, for whatever comes into your field of awareness, that too is known with a silent love.

And take a few moments to imagine, maybe as a light spreading out from you or a warmth, as tender silent love, tender silent awareness, that reaches out into the communities around you, spreads wide across the land, gently touching with your interest, your attention, your empathy, whoever it is that comes into view from the safety of your meditation, to allow your attention to wander wide and far, embracing an awareness, ready in awareness, to have a gentle, caring attention, caring love for whoever you encounter. Imagine that your care, your gentle love, silent love, awareness can become wider and wider to embrace the whole world and to have this tender attention where there can be empathy, care, love, respect, appreciation, delight, all together in a radical simplicity of silent love that's ready to be all-embracing of the whole world, where you breathe out into the whole world your warmth, your light.

And as we come to the end of this sitting, to hear this dedication of benefit, this loving wish for others to be well, to hear it in the deep silent sensitivity of your heart, the silent love. Let it touch there. Let it come out of there. Just listen deeply.

May all beings be happy. May all beings be safe. May all beings be peaceful. May all beings be free.

And may it be that the way that we walk through the world, in small ways, subtle ways, unspoken ways, we walk through the world with enough silent awareness, silent love, that we're more likely to have empathy, more likely to feel and sense the humanity of others. And so that, of course, we want to share our goodness, our generosity, our care for whoever we encounter. May all beings be happy. Thank you.