

Dharmette: Love (20) with Trustworthiness and Safety

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February 06, 2026

Keywords: Brahmavihāras, vipassanā, Vipassanā tradition, mettā, loving kindness, goodwill, appreciation, respect, rapport, trustworthiness

So, the miracle of love, this wonderful, vague or ambiguous word that we use so readily, many of us, but it has such a wide range of meanings. And what I'm offering, as we get ready to do it even further into the Buddhist idea of love, especially the *Brahmavihāras*, that it's made up of different component parts, and we want to be careful for what we bring into it. And not to assume that just because we call it love, that it's a singular thing and has authority or has to be the way it is, but to be able to look more deeply and see what it contributes to it, what elements of it. And so this week I offered appreciation as an element, respect, rapport, goodwill, and today, trustworthiness and safety.

And these are kind of maybe can be seen as in distinction to instead of appreciation, there might be desire, desire for pleasure, desire for, you know, praise, desire for to receive love and to receive praise or adoration. And we appreciate how good we feel with the goodness we receive, not necessarily the person. Rather than respect, we might not respect. We might respect our own desires, our own wishes, our own hostilities more than the other person. And so we're not really listening, being attentive to the other with respect.

And rapport also can be mixed up with, you know, the complications of wanting to receive something. And so we're looking for something, or we're afraid of something, we're afraid that we're judged, afraid that we have to be a certain way, otherwise we won't deserve or be worthy of being loved. And so there's a complicated rapport that goes on. And of course there might be lots of love, but it's complicated by the concern for what that relationship is, and is it, am I getting what I want?

And today, trustworthiness and safety, that the people that we love feel that they're safe with us. They feel they can trust us. That we don't have ulterior motives. We don't have trying to get something from them. And this is very important for a variety of kinds of love.

Certainly with sexual love or romantic love, there might be a strong desire for something, for time with a person, for attention, for being seen in a certain way, being seen as being the one that the other person is completely devoted to. And so there's the expectations we have of what we're going to receive back. And if there's expectations of receiving something a certain way, kind of demands of it, then it might be veering into the territory of it not quite being the love or we might not be trustworthy or safe for people. And of course we have agreements we have to keep. Of course it goes two ways with love.

But for the person to feel safe with us, that we're not going to take advantage of them. We're not going to force our will on them. We're not going to force our opinions, desires of what we should do or where we should go, how to spend our time, or that the person feels that when they're in our presence, that we respect them and that we're trustworthy, we're safe. And one of the ways to be trustworthy and safe is to be honest. Instead of having subconscious, unconscious, unexpressed desires, wishes, aversions that are operating, then there's not so much safety.

But to develop a way of being, a culture of honesty, where people know they can trust you because you'll say what's going on for you without, in saying it, being a way to get them to do what you want. And so I love this idea of being trustworthy and safe, because in that way we're also becoming trustworthy and safe for ourselves. That we're not overriding ourselves with this, being attached to something, clinging to something, being aversive, resisting to something. That there's a kind of, the channels are open within us, the simplicity of being.

And so in the meditation just now I tried to introduce the idea of doing nothing in meditation except seeing clearly. This tradition of ours has the word *vipassanā* as its primary, sometimes called the *Vipassanā* tradition or something. And *vipassanā* means to see clearly. And to do nothing but to see clearly. To do nothing in meditation and just allow the knowing, simple knowing. To do nothing in meditation but simple sensing.

So these are all kind of ways, some people call this being a very receptive mode, allowing mode, doing nothing and just allowing attention to be present, without attention being hostage to desires and aversions, without attention being picked up and applied for a particular purpose to accomplish something, to fix something, to get away from something. This is a powerful thing to experience in meditation, and to learn how to rest, be here, without trying to do anything except to know, except to feel. This is to get a sense of what that's like, then allows us to bring that to others. And for people who are caregivers, this is invaluable. People who offer spiritual care, this is a necessary part of the profession is to know how to be present, and to see and to be attentive, to bring our attention without first

and foremost trying to fix something, trying to make something happen.

Of course, there might be a time for that, but to really know how to be present in a completely safely, completely trustworthy way with a person not feeling put out, put upon, trying to make something happen. And this is, I think, an invaluable foundation for love. So how to make yourself trustworthy, how to make yourself safe for others? And to repeat myself, one of the things I'm suggesting is to begin by not wanting anything except to really know, to really listen, to really be present and attentive. And, but not overbearingly so, not leaning into a person, but there in a receptive, kind, supportive way.

So that the love can be simple, the love can be uncomplicated. So these five elements that I offered this week, it's not meant to make it complicated, it's meant to be the opposite. That as we know that these are the elements of love, that it helps shed some of the other ways, makes it unnecessarily complicated, sheds the way that love is not so safe for ourselves and others. That if there's no respect, the danger is there's a certain kind of disrespect, disrespect for the autonomy of the other person and the independence of them. If there is no appreciation, then the other person doesn't feel valued. And then there can be a dismissal or undervaluing that makes it more complicated.

If there's no goodwill, what is there? Is there ill will? Is there a kind of forceful willfulness that is there instead of goodwill, willful to have it our way? If there is no rapport, is it mostly, are we mostly in it for ourselves? Or are we mostly shut down and completely not present for someone else?

So the art of all this is to have all these qualities feel almost natural. They come out of the simplicity of being. And that's why this last quality, trustworthy and safety, where we're not trying to do anything, we're not trying to fix anything, makes room for something deeper movements of the heart to operate and to flow through. And they might be appreciation, respect, rapport, and goodwill.

So see over this weekend, over the next days, that what role in your life it has for you to be trustworthy for others and safe for others. Right? If you have friendships or people that you love, is there a simple way that's not too dramatic? Maybe it's almost not noticeable to them, except you see they behave differently around you, that you've become safe for them, trustworthy. You're not trying to make something happen, fix them. You're not trying to make it so it's your way. But you're just there in a full, generous way for them.

So... Thank you. So these are all foundational weeks we've had. And next week, well, I'm going to go spend more directly into some of the more classic practices of *mettā*, loving kind-

ness. And I hope that we've set a good foundation for this. So thank you, and I look forward to coming back here on Monday. And I apologize for some of the tech difficulties there were today. And hopefully we'll be back on track on Monday. Thank you.