

Dharmette: Love (23) Settled, Consistent Goodwill

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February 11, 2026

Keywords: mettā, loving-kindness, goodwill, mindfulness, meditation, peace walk, King Midas, friendliness, relaxation, wholeness

So, hello, my friends, and welcome to this next talk on *mettā*, goodwill, well-wishing, kindness, loving kindness, friendliness.

And we have this capacity to be friendly and kind. Sometimes we limit it to just the people closest to us. Sometimes it's limited just to a pet. I know a person that is somewhat of a neighbor who seems to always be a little bit sour, something like that. Never, if I talk to the person, the person usually expresses a kind of annoyance. But the person seems to have a tremendous love for their dogs that they go for walks with.

And it's kind of lovely to see the care, the love for the dog. We all have the capacity, and it's a capacity that we want to expand on and develop and grow. But what helps us to do that, to understand that, I believe, is if we see it as a natural capacity. It's not something we have to force. It's not something we have to kind of override other ways that we are.

Through the power of this practice of ours, we're learning to settle ourselves from the ways that we are that are somewhat, in some ways I'd like to say, unnatural. Unnatural in that it's not the full natural working of who we are when we're relaxed, at ease, at peace. That if we get consumed by aversion, that there's little room for kindness then. If we're consumed with greed or fear, there's little room for kindness, unless there's a situation that we come to where we can put all that down and just be with the closest people or the closest situation.

But we're learning in this practice to self-regulate, self-monitor, to understand how we get distracted from ourselves, how we get caught up in thoughts, how we believe we are our thoughts. We believe we are our aversions, our annoyances, our fears, our desires. We are the stories we tell ourselves about ourselves, all those that keep us kind of in a certain kind of stressful states. And this mindfulness practice is a meditation, is a deep way of de-stressing so that who we are when we're most ourselves can shine.

Kind of like when we become completely at home in ourselves. Maybe some people have a reference point of being at home, maybe as a child around the kitchen table, or as a home, maybe being put to bed as a small child, or maybe putting a child to bed. Yeah. And just the time, that's all we're doing. We're just there in a simple, kind way, as if there's all the time in the world.

And there, it's relatively easy then to have goodwill, basic friendliness, maybe, that it's difficult to do if we don't have time. We feel like time is short, and we're trying too much to do things and accomplish things, and the world just gets in the way, and so we're annoyed with the world rather than loving the world, caring for the world. And so what we're doing in loving-kindness practice is coming back to a natural capacity we have when we're settled and at home in ourselves. So it's not forcing ourselves, forcing love over, but it's one of the ways to support us, relax, settle, settle back into oneself so that the natural place of goodwill is, the goodwill that can happen when we're just at ease, have all the time in the world, we're just walking around the neighborhood with just not a care in the world and ready to say hello to people.

And someone asks for something as simple as directions. And you're so content and happy to see them. You're delighted. And you end up kind of maybe for a few extra seconds just kind of saying hello and happy to, you know, support them and guide them, and maybe you walk half a block or something. Just let me show you where it is. It's a little complicated down there, which way to go.

And so, you know, you have the time and this capacity. And then what we're doing in loving-kindness is then this movement of settling back into ourselves so that loving-kindness is more of a natural thing. Of course we are kind. Of course we have goodwill, friendliness in this state. And then we are gathering ourselves, unifying ourselves around this way of being.

We're reminding ourselves, coming back to it, remembering ourselves, putting back the members of who we are into this place of relaxed goodwill. And it's a remarkable thing to make that the primary orientation, primary field, primary dedication of our hearts, our minds, of who we are for a while. That rather than being consumed with anger and anger thoughts or consumed with desire and desire thoughts, we are not consumed, but we're producing consistently and clearly a field of goodwill, where our thoughts, our body, our state of mind, state of heart is there wishing well. Again, let's keep saying, not because we're forcing it or making it up, because we recognize it as a natural state of who we are. So we're settling back, opening up, unifying ourselves, gathering ourselves together, being

consistent.

This is what we're doing now. And the remarkable thing that can happen when we kind of settle and we start getting concentrated, we start getting unified. The distracted thoughts begin to quiet down and calm down and settle away. And it feels more and more natural to hold the course. We're in the groove. We're kind of moving along in the current of the river.

We're moving along on this great peace walk we're doing in our life, the walk of love. And it's remarkable how it can start developing a kind of flow, a kind of momentum inside that after a while is not so much something we have to do anymore, but something that we support, something where we keep promoting and encouraging. Yes, yes. And that's one of my favorite words for *mettā* or for practice in general, actually, is the word yes. Yes to kindness. Yes to goodwill.

That's there. Yes. Let it shine. Let it flow. Let it kind of fill the field of awareness. Let it fill our body.

And so this *mettā*-meditation is one where the primary, it's a remarkable thing about it, it's the primary state, the primary reference point, the primary way of thinking or way of being, more and more becomes kindness, becomes goodwill, *mettā*. And then we have this ability, and it's kind of a natural ability. Right. Some of it is as natural as we have a natural ability to be angry and to be hostile and to be grumpy and to be afraid, to be other ways. But those more difficult emotions limit us, hold us in check, get in the way of the fullness of who we are, the wholeness of who we are.

And there are some things that promote the wholeness, bring the wholeness out. And they come from relaxing at ease. And I think there's a number of things that people do in life where they realize that they're too tense to do it well. And so they do something that relaxes them, settles them, so that when they do it, they can really do it well and completely. And in meditation, we're taking this principle to a much higher level or more complete level.

We might be conventionally relaxed, but we're taking it to a deeper place of real settling and steadiness, openness. And that we have the ability to flow, immerse ourselves, to radiate, to glow with something that we would call goodwill. That we have the ability for it to be the consistent thoughts that we have, that the thoughts consistently are here thinking thoughts of goodwill. And we do it towards others, we do it towards ourselves. Even there's a kind of way, after a while, we feel like we're doing it even to objects.

You know, of course, you can't wish a cup goodwill. But the fact that you're seeing and holding the cup, there's a kind of, now it's kind of within the field of this glow, this warmth, this

kindness. And so the world we live in is something that we touch with kindness. And sometimes I think of it as like Midas's touch, the King Midas, so everything he touched became gold, which is actually kind of painful to think of for me. But we touch everything with our kindness.

And everything smiles. Everything feels safe. Everything is cared for. And this is a remarkable feeling to have.

So I'll end with the way I started the meditation earlier. We have these monks who just have walked for over 100 days from Texas to Washington, D.C., and I think they've walked over 23 miles a day. Remarkable accomplishment. Some of them do not seem very young. And the consistency in which they walk, step after step, promoting peace, thinking about peace.

There are monks that I'm pretty confident practice a lot of *mettā*, and I can imagine step after step, they had *mettā* for the whole country. The consistency of all that stepping, stepping, one little step at a time, that's all it takes. And so the same with *mettā*, same with goodwill. One little step at a time, consistently done, consistently kept up. Remember to be kind.

So this is the day, wonderful day, the day that these wonderful monks are doing peace, continuing their efforts for peace and peace meditations and talks in Washington, D.C. May we listen to them, and may we take this day to be our pilgrimage, our walk, the walk of *mettā*, the walk of goodwill, and not where every step is a breath, every breath. How much can you do that through the day? How much can you make that be the continuity, the flow, the second nature, and as a way of caring for yourself and being at ease, being settled, and not giving yourself away to emotions and feelings and thoughts that actually separate you from a deep, settled way of being at home in this world, at home treating everyone as relatives and friends. May we practice living kindness today, consistently and thoroughly. Thank you.