

Guided Meditation: Metta for the Details of Ourselves

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Good morning, my friends, and welcome to our morning meditation, at least here in California. And so the topic of the meditation is these weeks is *mettā*, often translated as loving-kindness, tend to translate it as goodwill. And one of the challenges of doing this form of meditation, evoking this form of social attitude or emotion, is to not be limited by any particular definition of what we think it is. Sometimes we find a definition that, or hear a teacher, say something that seems kind of the standard is really high, and it seems like it's, you know, too difficult for us, or we can't. The word love is a very imprecise word. Maybe it's used by individuals precisely, but the way it's used in English, it has a very wide range of meanings.

And so if it's used... we have to understand the meaning that works for us, at least in terms of doing this loving-kindness meditation, is to begin appreciating all the different ways that we love or we care or we have goodwill, and to find that way which works for us rather than some ideal way that is outside of us or something foreign. When... So, for example, when I was, many years ago, I was in a foreign country and I went to get my haircut, and it was phenomenal. The care, the attention that the barber gave, and it was more caring, maybe more loving, more attentive, more careful, more kind, more friendly, then I often... receive in my ordinary life. And started off with a massage of the shoulders, the way the barber touched my head, cut the hair, shaved me. There was so much tenderness, so much attentiveness.

There was so much carefulness that I relaxed deeply and just felt like I was safe, that I was cared for, that I was... You know, you could conventionally say that I was loved, that I was treated with kindness, with respect, with value, with. And I found myself feeling quite happy, content, just kind of very safe at the hands of this barber. And it's easy to imagine that that was a form of love. That was a form of goodwill that I received. So what is it? What are the ingredients of *mettā*?

One of them is attentiveness. We simply attend to something maybe tenderly, maybe slowly. Another is that we give time. We show that we're taking time to be with a person where it as if maybe time disappears, as if this is what we're doing at this time with no hurry. Maybe there's a sense of interest. Maybe there's a feeling that this person values you.

Maybe there's a sense of carefulness, like treating something like it's delicate or fragile or treating something as being extremely special. I've felt a kind of wonderful love for plants in the garden when I've been a gardener. and just kind of feeling this warmth, this desire to care, to nourish, to nurture these plants. I remember feeling quite parental towards the plants. And so all these words are kind of in the whole kind of soup of what we might call goodwill or call *mettā*. And within that soup, we find our own way.

That is our form of loving-kindness. And this becomes particularly important. when we offer this kind of goodwill to ourselves. And one way to do that is rather than doing it for all of ourselves, the whole catastrophe of self, if some people might, the way they feel about themselves, if we do the kindness to the particular parts of ourselves that seem relevant at a given time. So that's what we'll do today. And then as we do it, see if you can find your own way to attend to these different parts of yourself in such a way that it's your form of goodwill, *mettā*.

So to assume a meditation posture, maybe like you're the masseuse, the barber, maybe the nurse, who's going to gently adjust the body of someone. carefully, kindly, respectfully. Adjust your body to be in a posture of dignity. Sitting, you can be upright. Lying down, adjust the shoulder blades, the spine, the shoulders. So that the shoulders kind of roll backwards and down a little bit.

And then the chest has a chance to be more open. and gently close your eyes. And like the way, maybe this barber of mine, went to touch my head slowly and gently with care. Slowly, gently become aware of your body. If you've had a, ever had a massage that seemed like the masseuse was caring, gentle, kind, friendly to your body, so you... with attention to the body. Approach it kindly, gently, to feel it, to get to know it as it is, and then within the body as part of the body, with appreciation, with care, become aware of breathing.

The breathing that supports your very living without you needing to usually pay attention to it. To take time To just know your breathing with a knowing the time is making space for your breathing to be known, to be cared for, appreciated. Part of *mettā* is appreciation. Part of it might be a delight, a pleasure, the pleasure of being able to attend kindly, gently. And if your breathing is challenged in any way, Assume that simply being a friend who accompanies the challenge is enough. Being present, giving time to know, to feel.

If there are parts of your body that are challenging, what would it be like to bring for what you might call love to that part of your body? It can start with giving a time. to be known, to be recognized for what it is, to be present for it without struggling with it, to make room for it, to have its own autonomy, to trust that maybe the body knows its own way, to make room so that there can be relaxing and opening around the physical challenge, where your desire for healing or for healing The absence of suffering is a non-assertive form of goodwill that has a pleasure in it. The pleasure of wishing well. May be offering a kind word or two to your body.

May you be well. May you know that I care. May you find ease. And then with a kind of attending that is friendly, caring, offers a kind of feeling of safety to what's cared for. Bring a caring attention to your mind just to feel it, to accompany it. The sensations, the feeling, the mood, state of mind behind your thinking.

And if your mind is challenging, challenged, be the friend who accompanies the challenged mind not to shame it or fix it or be upset with it, but to simply give time for it to be known and be felt. And then to sit here now in the middle of all things, with your breathing, with your body, and whatever arises in your experience, whatever you know, whatever you feel, that's in the present moment. Meet it with *mettā*, with attention, with care, with goodwill, with a tenderness or a gentleness that conveys goodwill not to you as a whole but to the particular experience that arise here and now. May whatever you feel, whatever you know, be touched with the mightiest touch, the *mettā* touch, in whatever simple way, you can have something in the family of goodwill. With every inhale, filling the breath with goodwill so that an in-breath is an expression of kindness for every exhale, infused with goodwill, kindness, tenderness that spreads beyond the edges of breathing through your body.

And as we come to the end of this sitting, to see if there's something in the family of goodwill, appreciation, valuing, resonating, offering safety and time and attention can be something you spread that spreads from you into your surrounding space. The room you're in, maybe it is like a soft loving light that flows outwards, or a gentle warmth, or a soft wind riding the rhythm of breathing. and a soft goodwill well-wishing flowing from the marrow of your body outwards into the world. Wishing well for everyone. Wishing everyone can be their best selves, their happy selves, their peaceful selves. Everyone could be settled and calm.

So the best of what it is to be a human being becomes second nature for everyone. May all beings be happy, may all beings be safe, may all beings be peaceful, may all beings be free of suffering, free of oppression and poverty and violence. May all beings be respected, valued, and know that there is goodwill in this world. And may they know it because you bring it to

the world. Your goodwill is invaluable. Trust it, treasure it, remember it.

May we live for the welfare and happiness of others. Thank you.