

Guided Meditation: Continuity of Goodwill

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February 19, 2026

Keywords: mettā, mettā-samādhi, samādhi, Dharma, goodwill, loving-kindness, meditation, hindrances, attitude, continuity

Hello, everyone, and welcome. And we continue now with the meditations on *mettā*, goodwill. And there's a few things, two things I would like to emphasize today that are support for developing meditation, you know, *samādhi*, *mettā-samādhi*, which means to be immersed in the experience of *mettā*, of goodwill. And I worded that way because to be immersed in the experience so that we don't take too much emphasis on our personal role in doing the practice, in doing the focus, and engaging in we have to offer our effort for sure. But there's something more going on here that we're beginning to attune ourselves or immerse ourselves in the byproduct, in the sensations, the feelings, the experience of becoming gathered, becoming centered, becoming steady, settling in and being able to really allow the pleasure of goodwill, pleasure of goodwill meditation, to begin spreading and filling us so that it becomes, at some point, all-pervading. So there are two things that contribute to us, again, becoming immersed, becoming really, sometimes language is absorbed, fully engaged in *mettā*.

One is the attitude that we have in doing the practice. And before I say what that might be, I want to give an analogy that when my son was quite, my older son was quite young, he was in preschool, and we had a wonderful preschool, had a little bit of a spiritual *Dharma* orientation, and I had occasions to visit sometimes. And I visited one day, and all the preschool kids were napping. And so immediately, when I realized that, my attitude, my way of being there shifted. I became very quiet, very attentive to not make any noise. And I did it with a feeling of tremendous kind of love, tenderness, love, just very attuned, immersed in this beautiful quiet of these kids sleeping who normally are running around, you know, making lots of noise.

And I knew that how important it was for them to have a nap. I knew what happens when our son at least didn't get enough of his nap and the consequences were sometimes challenging

for us. And so I changed my attitude. I was there with a tenderness, with a quiet, with a kind of a love, a kind of taking in the atmosphere, taking in the stillness. And there was a kind of a love that was a kind of way I shifted myself, how I was. Maybe similar to how in the old days we would shift how we were if we walked into a library.

Of course we change. So there's a changed attitude when we're going to do *mettā*. And we want to become quieter. We want to become more gentle. We want to not kind of be in such a way that we wake up the napping hindrances that might be there. The napping or close to napping aversions we might have or complaints we have about life.

And then to have the attitude of love, that whatever, we have to offer something. We have to offer attention, steadiness, centeredness. We have to offer the goodwill in some way, bring it up as we do it. But can you do it? Can we do it almost like as a way of offering love? Some people might say as if you're loving yourself, or as if you're speaking and have an attitude towards someone that you love a lot.

Maybe you have a small child you're putting to sleep, and so the love of speaking to them, they help them to go into sleep at night. Or so that shift and change, don't kind of come in to do *mettā* meditation with the same way of talking to yourself and being with yourself as you normally would have, kind of come straight off a busy life. Be ready for a shift of attitude, an attitude of goodwill, an attitude of tenderness, of gentleness, of kind of like you're really caring, of care. That's one. The second is to have continuity, to have a steadiness, to have a steadiness through time. Just stay close, stay close in the same way that you would keep your hand on the steering wheel as you drive without ever taking it off.

You don't ever take yourself off the steering wheel of *mettā*. And the steering wheel of *mettā*, that which we keep the focus on, will vary from person to person. But at some focal point, something at the center of it all, that not the center of the whole thing, of course steering wheel is not the whole experience. When we drive, we're aware of the car, the environment around us, but we stay steady on the steering wheel. And so for *mettā*, if there is a feeling of kindness, stay connected continuously. Don't take your hands off it.

If it's phrases of loving-kindness you're making or a simple word, kindness, love, *mettā*, or may you be happy, peaceful, some people have little, and that's what the voice that lovingly says that, wishes that, that that's the steering wheel we stay with. It might be the pleasure associated with goodwill. At some point, there might be some pleasure of sitting in meditation, sitting there getting centered, getting quiet, and there's some kind of pleasure that's there. And so that's the steering wheel. Stay steady with the pleasure. Just got to flow with it.

And for some people, one way to do this is to also stay with the breathing. Maybe there's a steering wheel and there's the column that holds a steering wheel. They're connected. So you stay with the breathing. Breathe with the focal point. Breathe with the steering wheel.

Breathe through it, and every breath, it helps that continuity, the continuity that only lasts the inhale, only lasts the exhale, kind of like you're petting a cat, that only lasts how long you have the hand on the cat, kind of like pushing a scooter, where you push scooter, and then you just allow yourself to feel the momentum until you need to push again. So the breathing is like, either like petting the cat or like gentle pushing of a scooter, like to be here with the steering wheel of *mettā*. So those two things, attitude and continuity. So to assume a meditation posture and to gently close your eyes and to take a few moments just to be here, nothing to do, nothing to be there, nothing required, except allowing yourself the benefits, maybe the pleasure of just being here as you are, maybe with a loving curiosity. How are you now?

And see if you can shift your attitude to be one of kindness, gentleness. Allow yourself to be as you are, but in connecting to it, knowing it, an attitude of care, as if you're meeting yourself, as if you yourself or your experience here is someone you love, and maybe you don't have to love yourself, but as if you do, shift the inner attitude and inner voice in how you are present for yourself. And to whatever degree you can have a kind, metaphor, attitude, have that go through every effort you make, everything that you do, starting with taking a few fuller inhales and longer relaxing exhales. Let your breathing return to normal. And then for a few rounds, gently, lovingly, wish yourself well, may I be happy.

Or if it's easier to connect to *mettā*, offer it to another person that you know that's easy. And as an alternative to how many people live their lives without much love, without much *mettā*, spending some minutes now focusing on goodwill is a very beneficial, healthy thing to do. And where is the center point, the steering wheel of *mettā* for you. Is it in the words, well-wishing words? Is there some place in the mind and the heart that smiles? Is there some pleasure in the body, mind or heart associated with *mettā*?

And then somehow coordinate breathing with your *mettā*, breathing with the focal point, the steering wheel, breathing through it, connecting to that steering wheel with the inhale and then again with the exhale, having a steadiness, a continuity. That for now, this is all you're going to do. Anything else falls away to the side. Keeping your attention on the central point of *mettā*, the steering wheel, the intention, the attitude, the pleasure, breathing with it, with every breath, dipping into the whole experience, the whole way in which *mettā* is a wide, broad experience of body, mind and heart. And as we come to the end of the sitting, to stay with your breathing, breathing with whatever pleasure or glow feeling there is, that you as-

sociate with, you associate with *mettā*.

And as you would maybe drive a car and on a freeway, you wouldn't take your hand off the steering wheel or your focus off the road. But you could also be immersed in the whole experience of the natural world around you, the road, maybe you going through an area where there's a lot of forests that open up into a wide vista, and now you're immersed in the whole experience of driving with the vista. So with *mettā*, staying with your hand, your mind, your attention, on whatever is the focal point for *mettā*, and allow yourself now to enter into some sense of the wider world, expanding the boundaries of awareness to become boundless, going out and spreading across the world, wishing all beings well. May all beings be happy. May all beings be safe. May all beings be peaceful.

May all beings be free. And may we carry goodwill with us through our day. Thank you.