

Guided Meditation: Metta for a Friend

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Welcome to our meditation, 30-minute meditation session, and we're engaged in the practice of *mettā*, of goodwill, and the way that it's most classically taught is to begin a process. It's taught as a process of expanding our goodwill to more and more people until we develop the capacity to have universal goodwill, goodwill for everyone. And to do that in a realistic way, the idea is to start where it's easiest and really establish it well there and then grow it. Learn how to have the heart open, caring, sensitive, kind to more people in the way you do it to the people who are closest. And then, first, people are maybe a little bit, you know, more difficult or just not quite as easy. And then, outwards and eventually to even people who, in the ancient texts, they call the enemies.

In the United States, we often use the word difficult people. And so universalizing our love, our care, our goodwill. And what's important to appreciate, we're doing this in meditation, and it's private. No one needs to know about it. You don't have to invite, if you kind of care for the welfare of happiness of all beings everywhere, it does not mean you have to invite them all for dinner. There needs to be wisdom.

So whatever you meet, you might meet them with kindness, but with wisdom, in the context, situation, what's happening. But the part of that wisdom is now in meditation. Hopefully you're meditating in a safe location. For the time being, you're safe. For the time being, you don't have to make any choices about people. And in this particular setting, we're learning to universalize our goodwill and develop our capacity.

And so some of us, it might be better to think of it as it's really for your own sake. And whether other people deserve it or whether you should behave with them with goodwill, that's for wisdom to decide later. But now it's so good for us, so good for us as a practitioner, to not restrict our capacity to love, to not hold it in check for anyone, and learn what that's like.

And that becomes valuable material that wisdom can work with. So today we're going to expand from the easy person to the person who is maybe a friend that's maybe a little bit complicated.

So to assume meditation posture, and to give some care, to assume a posture that allows your heart, your chest, your heart center, to be available, to be sensitive, for it may be tenderness, gentleness, warmth, to be ready at hand, and to gently close your eyes, and to touch into, to feel into within you, where the seat of goodwill is for you, the seat of *mettā* or of love. Does it tend to be in the heart center? Does it tend to be somehow around the eyes, the back of the eyes, does it in the belly? Is it throughout the body in some broad way? You don't have to be feeling it now, but to feel, see if you can recall the place, places in the body that light up when there's the warmth and softness of love, goodwill.

And as you breathe in, to appreciate, to breathe a little deeper so you can appreciate a deeper connection to your body and to yourself on the inhale. And there can be a caring relaxation on the exhale. Considering how good it would be for this body of yours, to be at ease and happy, to be soft with a kind of gentle love. And it's just good to know that you would like that, even if you don't feel that. Even gently wanting it without expectation or demand or ideas that you can't. Just knowing that you care for yourself, for your body, your heart.

Let that care and goodwill grow on the inhale and spread through your body. And as you exhale, to let the care, your goodwill, radiate outward, like a warmth that radiates or a light that shines, or like a bell that rings and the ringing reverberates outwards. And then bring to mind a friend that is not the easiest person to have goodwill for, but pretty easy, where there might be little resistance, a little question about it, whether it's always useful or whether you always have it. So for a friend, and as you inhale, allow your goodwill to spread through your body, expand, grow, and as you exhale, allow your goodwill to radiate, to shine, extend on your friend, maybe visualizing their face or some other way in front of you, having soft, loving eyes, gazing upon the friend, knowing your appreciation for them, your respect for them, knowing there's a resonance between you. As the goodwill expands and grows on the inhale, you might say gently, softly, the words, may you be, and on the exhale, the final word, happy, safe, peaceful, free, as a way of immersing yourself in the goodwill.

Can you find the center of it where it's quiet and still, warm? Perhaps as you do *mettā* for your friend, you can think of them with a smile, with a degree of happiness, to be carried along in your goodwill. And then as we come to the end of the sitting, to relax and open your attention beyond your friend, to open your care and love, beyond your friend widely, spaciouly out into the world. Breathing in and filling yourself with goodwill, with love, with care, with well-

wishing for yourself, for this body. And on the exhaling, allow it to spread further out, out into the world. No one left out.

May all be happy. May all beings be safe. May all beings be peaceful. May all beings be free, and in small acts of kindness, may we spread goodwill, kindness, friendliness into this world. Thank you.