

Guided Meditation: Goodwill Offer of Safety

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Warm greetings from Insight Meditation Center. And continuing with our subject of *mettā*, kindness, goodwill, love. One of the ways to appreciate that this kind of social attitude, social emotion, is not excessively sentimental or somehow, I don't know, covering over or overemphasizing some kind of ideal at the expense of a real deeper connection to reality, the human reality, is that one of the functions of *mettā*, one of the characteristics or gifts of this kind of attitude of *mettā*, is to convey a real sense of safety. Fear, anxiety, is a big part of human life. And that we have a human need to feel safe, to not be threatened. And to be able to meet that fear with conveying a sense that here, in this attitude, in this place, here with me, you are safe.

This is a great gift. This is what a friend can do. And we can do that for ourselves. And the wonderful kind of, maybe you call it a paradox or kind of two-sided aspect of doing this for oneself, is we can both feel afraid and we can be the very source of offering safety to that fear. We can offer friendliness to that fear. We can offer kindness to that fear.

That settles something that's reassuring, that at least in this time and place, at least in this body, there's something here that settles us, that conveys a sense of safety and friendliness and warmth, kindness. It isn't safety because all things are neutral, it's safety because of friendship, kindness, goodwill. And to be able to convey that kind of friendship to others, we have to know something inside of ourselves of how to be a safe person. Don't worry about needing to do it all the time. Just know that there are times and situations where you can. And that's where it all begins to grow, grow from there.

And so to start with oneself. So to assume a meditation posture. And the posture can convey so much if you're careful, take your time with it. And maybe the posture itself can contain within it something reassuring, something that reassures our anxiety or fear. Maybe the idea

there's space for it. Maybe this idea that yes, now it can be held, it can be known gently, kindly, without being in its grip, without being unduly influenced by it.

Gently taking some fuller breaths and relaxing in the body, relaxing from the outside of your body, your muscles, and settling deep inside, and letting your breathing return to normal. And for a few more breaths, to feel the expansion as you breathe in, filling, and a relaxing settling as you exhale. If there is any anxiety or fear, as you relax and settle, settle through it to a place deeper than your fear. Can you find a place inside that feels confident, safe, that's already reassured? Maybe a place that has some quality of quiet and stillness with a sensitivity to... which a simple reassuring kindness can gaze upon what is afraid, where that which feels safe spreads reassuring goodwill on that which is anxious. Breathing in, breathing out, reassurance, goodwill.

And then bring to mind someone for whom it's easy to have goodwill, friendship, easy person, a friend. Maybe with an image of their face in front of you, maybe with feeling your friendship and care for this person, offering them the gift of safety through an attitude of well-wishing goodwill. Your goodwill arises with the beginning of the inhale, growing and spreading, and releasing towards your friend as you exhale. May you be happy.

And then, to spread this goodwill further out into the world, consider someone you know, maybe very likely, someone that somehow you encounter periodically, but you don't know them, and you have no particular challenge or benefit. They're kind of, it's called a neutral person. The situation in which you encounter them is a safe one. And consider this person who you hardly know, but who is like you, a human with all the common challenges that humans have. In thinking of this person and people like this that you hardly know, offer this goodwill and the safety of kindness, friendliness, with a heartfelt wishing them well. May you be happy. May you be safe. May you be peaceful, may you be free.

And from this place within you where you feel safe, maybe because it's so deep and private, quiet, offer safety to this person. Safety from you, safety and goodwill. Imagining the reassurance it provides, the goodness that it provides, offering your goodwill to neutral people, to a single person you can think of, or to whoever comes to mind with each breath. Offering safety and goodwill, and imagining that they relax and are reassured, and how that comes back to you as a reassurance for you. Safety in return, simple goodwill reciprocated. Thank you.

And as we come to the end of the sitting, to turn your gaze outward, wider into the world, bringing along your imagination to imagine your smile, your goodwill, spreading a warm light of warm radiance throughout the lands like a sunrise, and the sun begins to shine. So a

mettā rise, a smile rise from you spreads out across the lands, imagining that even the land responds happily, let alone the people. Imagine a smile spreading from person to person and wishing them all safety and happiness, beginning with your wish. Your wish conveys here is a person who's safe for you, at least for right now. May all beings be happy. May all beings be safe. May all beings be peaceful. May all beings be free.

And may each of our goodwill, each of us care for this suffering world, motivate us to in some degree contribute to the welfare and happiness of all beings. May all beings be happy. Thank you.