

Guided Meditation: Metta for Difficult Person

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Welcome to our meditation. And the topic is meditating with goodwill, meditating with kindness, with love, with friendliness, not as a kind of sentimental thing to do, but rather that it's one of the most important things we can do. It's one of the most serious things we can do. That to have a profound respect for all beings, all people, and a profound sense of there is a capacity for us to find peace, to find friendship, to find mutual respect. It is possible. It might be next to impossible. It might be a phenomenal challenge.

But the world is filled with people with animosity who end up becoming friends. It is possible. And in the Dharma, this is a possibility that we pursue because, for many reasons, for compassion, for care for the world and others, but also because if we really leave, find a way to settle our hearts, to really be at ease, at home in ourselves, without being in a hurry, without being afraid, without being contracted with hatred or greed or delusion, without being caught in the challenges others bring us, to learn how to be free in the midst of it. If we learn that, all these difficult things, two things can happen. One is we're maturing in the Dharma. We're on our way to awakening. The other is that we begin understanding that this is what the heart wants to do.

This is the natural inclination of the heart to be friendly, to be kind. And we do it because it's good for us, because we want to do it. So it's coming today to the last category of the week. The traditional wording of it, the five categories, is to oneself, to a benefactor, I'm saying the easy person, to a friend, to a neutral person, and then to an enemy. Here in the West we sometimes say to a difficult person. So we'll do it for a difficult person.

I'll ask you to choose someone who's difficult for you. Don't choose the most difficult. Choose someone who's mildly so or moderately so, so that it's not such a high challenge to find some modicum of goodwill for that person. And the way I'm going to offer to you,

the guidance, is you're not going to go all out just to kind of non-stop have goodwill for this person, but there's going to be alternation where you tap into goodwill independent of the person who's difficult on the inhale, and then you touch into doing some modicum of goodwill for the person. Maybe from a distance, maybe just tapping in, maybe just to the glance. Just, you know, you don't have to go all in, just enough.

And then slowly begin exploring what keeps you from doing more? What are the hesitations that maybe you can let go of and put down in the privacy of meditation? And it's safe to go further, just to offer more, and then to leave on the inhale and go back to the other. So it's a gentle massage, alternation. And for the inhale, I'd recommend that you use and think about the easy person. The person is easy to have love for, kindness for, goodwill for, *mettā*, and where there's a resonance, where you're inspired, where you appreciate them, that your goodwill for them is partly a product of how good you feel, just knowing them, how they inspire you.

So you're breathing into that inspiration, you're breathing in their goodness, in a sense, the resonance they have with you, that you have with them, and then offering some of that goodwill to this difficult person on the exhale, breathing in the goodness and breathing out the goodwill. So, assuming a meditation posture, and since we're going to be doing the difficult person or a difficult person, maybe a posture that feels, emphasizes stability and a degree of strength, that you're really here grounded in yourself, and at least through the posture, confident in yourself, that in this circumstance, sitting and meditating, you can take care of yourself. You're safe. And taking a few long, slow, deep breaths, relaxing on the exhale, letting your breathing return to normal. And continue this cycle of breathing in, feeling your body, your heart, your mind. And on the exhale, softening, relaxing.

And then bring to a mind some person for whom it's easy to appreciate their goodness. That you know them, it brings you a smile, you're inspired by the way they are in the world because they're kind or friendly or ethical. Their very being kind of touches you in a good way. And as you breathe in, imagine you're breathing in that goodness. You're taking the way you're touched by this person, the goodness, the friendliness. You're breathing it in and spreading it through your body, filling yourself with it.

And on the exhale, spreading well-wishing goodwill out into the world, a kind of simple, gentle friendliness. And then think of a person who's difficult for you, difficult for you to have kindness or friendliness. Maybe an image, visualizing an image of them in front of you, somehow remembering their presence. And then on the inhale, breathing in the goodness of your easy person. Breathing in the friendship, the way you breathe in, and touch that place inside

that's inspired by them, that resonates with them. And on the exhale, send that goodness out to the difficult person.

Send them goodwill or friendliness. Maybe with, may you be happy. Then put that aside on the inhale and remember the easy person. Gently alternate between the two. And if it feels too fast to do it, just to inhale and exhale, you can spread it out, that alternation, over several breaths. But the principle is alternating between the two.

As you alternate between the easy person and the difficult person, the kind of way in which you instruct yourself to do so, the kind of words of goodwill you might use, might be closer to non-verbal, barely saying them, almost like an attitude more than words, taking in the good person and sending out goodwill to the difficult person. Just whatever you can do, however little, however far away, offering kindness to the difficult person, as if you're freeing up your heart, as if you're freeing up your inside, so your love is not held in check without any worry that the person knows you're doing this or that they deserve it. Just offer it freely and feel the goodness of that. And then taking some time just with the easy person, whatever resonates deep inside of you that inspires you about the easy person. Breathe into that. Expand it on the inhale, and then offer universal goodwill to all beings on the exhale, like a light that turns on and spreads its light throughout the world.

Spread your goodwill on the exhale, relaxing backwards into your seat, at home, at ease, here and now, for a few seconds. Give yourself that, that gift, simplicity of being as you gaze out into the world that you'll encounter today, needing nothing from it, just gazing upon it and wishing it well, wanting happiness and peace for this world, and repeating yourself these words, maybe to give expression, a silent voicing of your heart's goodwill. May all beings be happy, may all beings be safe, may all beings be peaceful, may all beings be free, and may whatever ways we benefit from our meditation, from our Buddhist communities, from our own kindness and goodwill, may we do so for the welfare and happiness of others as well. May we live in companionship with the whole world. May all beings be happy, and may we contribute to that possibility. Thank you.