

Guided Meditation: Goodwill to the Sense of Self

Gil Fronsdal

March 09, 2026

Keywords: mettā, mettā samādhi, samādhi, not-self, goodwill, sense of self, love, kindness, meditation posture, all beings be happy

Hello, everyone, and welcome. And back here with the emphasis, the teachings on *mettā* and the *mettā samādhi*, the wonderfulness of having something well up from within that is warm, tender, calm, nourishing, nurturing, kind. This amazing human capacity, maybe it's mammalian capacity, to care for others, care for oneself, to love, and all the different varieties of love that there are. And what a wonderful thing to stay close to it. And so the *samādhi* of *mettā*, to be... immersed in this experience of love, because the mind is not distracted by other things, because the mind is not preoccupied by anything. The mind is occupied in this whole engagement with goodwill, with friendliness, kindness, not because of any other reason than it's a natural capacity that we can, from time to time, shower and bathe in, and it's so good for us.

It's so cleansing. It's so inspiring. It does so much good, just as some people, maybe we'll actually take a physical shower every day, to every day to spend a little bit of time with our capacity to be showered with love, to be absorbed or immersed in it. So for this week, to give a certain kind of grounding and strength to the practice of *mettā*, I would like to emphasize the agent, the agent who practices the *mettā*, that part of us that gets organized, coordinated, that chooses to do this practice of *mettā*. And even though Buddhism has its teachings about not-self, we want to be very careful not to dismiss our sense of self which is a completely natural thing that we're constructed as human beings to do, to have some sense of our agency, some sense of tracking our inner life, some sense of making choice and decisions and reflection and contemplation. This sense of self that we have should not be seen as an enemy, even when sometimes it's a burden.

It comes with a weight, it comes with a tension, it creates a tension, it creates a sense of all kinds of challenging emotions arises out of this sense of self. But that doesn't mean that the

sense of self is wrong. It's a normal human thing that can stop, can rest, can disappear from time to time. It's not fixed, it's not fixed, universal, it doesn't have, not always there. And we can find our freedom with it. And we can use that sense of self that provides stability, strength to our capacity to care, to love.

In fact, the love we have might have more value if the sense of self is stable and strong and transparent. And translucent, and porous, strong and free of clinging. So to begin, taking a meditation posture, and part of the value of meditation posture is to not do it too casually as a way of sitting comfortably to forget about your body, but to use your body and your posture as part of that decisiveness, that intentionality, to be present, to be fully here with all of our faculties, including a physical presence. And whether you're sitting or lying down or standing, there might be some way to adjust the posture, to be intentional. So the posture itself expresses attentiveness.

Gently closing the eyes, and with the eyes closed, to see if you can find some very simple, generalized way that you feel your sense of self, some general sense, not too well-defined perhaps. That's been a companion for you through your life. The sense of self might not be who you are, but it is there within as a reference point, and like arranging your posture, can you organize that sense of self within so you recognize it's there, you feel it, you give it room and space, maybe appreciation, and with the exhale, releasing any pressure you put on it, or any pressure it puts on itself. The sense of self might be in a particular place in your body, or it might be very generalized and wide and generalized. It's not a fixed thing, so there's so many different ways it can be felt. It might be some pressure, concentration, contraction.

There might be some warmth, some care in it. There might be fear, desire. As you exhale, relax the sense of self, or relax the place from which you know or think, or the place within which you feel or sense your experience, the place of decisions, the place of wonder and awe. And as we continue now in silence, see if you can offer your goodwill, your *mettā*, to your sense of self, becoming friends with that sense of self within, giving it a break from all its work, forgiving it for all that's difficult. And for these few minutes, may this sense of self be happy, safe, peaceful. Breathe through it with love.

Breathe with it in kindness. Wishing it well, lightening its load. To have a love for *mettā*, for one sense of self, can be enhanced by appreciating some of our abilities, some of our inner sensibilities, our own kindness, goodwill, to appreciate the goodness of... within that comes with the sense of self, and to wish it well. And as we come to the end here, to whatever degree, to whatever way you've been offered love, kindness to yourself, your sense of self, this is a great capacity, a great thing to care, offer goodwill, and to turn that around for you to offer

it now out into the world, and to offer it from that sense of self, the sense of self that's been loved, let it now radiate out into the world its goodwill. May all beings be happy.

May all beings be safe. May all beings be peaceful. May all beings be free. And may our sense of self be one that maintains goodwill for all that we encounter. May all beings be happy. Thank you.