

Guided Meditation: Metta Arising

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Hello and good morning and welcome.

And the theme for these meditations during this period of time is the topic of love. And right now particularly goodwill, *mettā*. And sometimes I think there's no really perfect English word for the word *mettā*. It's some deep, heartfelt warmth and delight, appreciation, generosity, a radiance of goodwill, love, loving-kindness. And one of the remarkable things about it and how to access it is doing nothing. Learning the art of no longer incessantly thinking, trying to figure things out, trying to make things happen.

There is a way in which we are constantly in motion and feel like we have to respond or do or think or figure out. We have to do the practice. We have to get something, attain something. And a lot of meditation practice in Buddhism is undoing, is not doing, is the ending of doing. Not because we're going to become some blank, but rather what we're undoing is the surface world that we live in, the surface world of reactivity and constructing, making up thoughts and ideas and pasts and futures. And to really abide in the present moment fully in its own terms without any additions from the control tower, so that our glorious human life can somehow find an expression through us, that there's a deep capacities we have for functioning, for feeling, for intention, for understanding.

That is not something that the control tower, the small self, has to do, has to figure out. It's almost like the control tower is allowed to take a vacation so that something very deep inside can surface and show itself. And deep feelings, like the concept of confidence, to be filled with confidence, might be more than just the logical understanding that you're capable of doing something. There might be a cellular or embodied feeling, sense, pervasive sense of capacity and energy and the feeling of yes, and I can do this, that is being expressed, is living in us. And so love is that way. Goodwill, *mettā*, is that way.

We can discover how it's being, how it's arising, how it's the nature of an open heart and an empty mind of sorts, empty of a lot of constructive thinking, discursive thinking. And we're getting out of the way for the sensitive heart. We're getting out of the way for the glowing heart, the radiant heart. We're getting out of the way of a natural and maybe subtle capacity to love, which doesn't have to have an object. It, in fact, having objects for love sometimes can diminish this quality of the love, which is just a natural flow, a natural radiance of who we are. So doing nothing.

So assuming a posture that expresses some degree of confidence, some degree of that it's valuable to be fully present here, and gently closing the eyes. And feeling deep within your body, your torso, your diaphragm, the natural expression of the body wanting to breathe. If at the end of the exhale, you allow there to be a brief pause, just long enough to feel, not from the control tower, but from deep in your body, the impulse to breathe in, and then give in to that. Allow it. And at the top of the inhale, a pause, not just momentary, just long enough to feel that there's an impulse, you could say a desire, to let go and exhale. You can almost feel the whole length of the exhale, the body's desire or impulse to breathe out.

Allow it, follow it, all the way to the end. Follow the whole impulse of breathing in, all the way to the end of breathing in. Feel the naturalness of that urge arising from deep within. And with continuing a gentle connection to your breathing, open up the awareness wider to feel your body more broadly, to see if there's any embodied urge, desire, momentum, to relax. And as you exhale, allow the relaxation of the body.

As you breathe, becoming aware of any tension in the mind, the thinking mind. And see if you can feel in that tension the impulse, the desire to relax the mental tension. And see if you can give in to that impulse, maybe in very minute ways, with every breath, softening the thinking mind. Feeling whatever subtle impulse, desire, the mind has to rest, to become still, to allow thinking to become quiet, soft. And then doing the same with a heart center, feeling the area around your heart in the middle of your chest, and see if there's any maybe quiet, soft impulse there, to let something in your heart rest, relax, and allow something else to open.

And if you do your best to do as little as you can, except being still and quiet and sensing, feeling for that *mettā* deep within, that is not something you do, but something that's being expressed from deep within. Tender care, gentle kindness, a warm goodwill. And as you breathe, stay close to the natural expression, natural love. That is not something you do, but something that the heart is, an expression, a glow, a flow. Let it flow, radiate, without doing anything, except being aware.

Be aware of the space all around you and how the expression of goodwill, kindness as radiance, can flow and glow out into that space all around you with every breath. Breathing, being the gentle bellows, keeping the flame of love flowing, glowing. Maybe introducing a small smile in your lips, in your heart, that allows for more of the expression of love, goodwill, warm-heartedness. And as we begin approaching the end of the sitting, I'll offer you a question, contemplative question, not to be answered by the mind, not to be discovered by the mind, but to be felt by the heart. To have something expressed or arise out of the heart.

What way of loving, what love wants to be born in you? What love arises in you? And then to imagine that your love, your goodwill, spreads out into the room around you, the space around you, out into the world. Like a gentle, refreshing breeze, like a gentle warmth of the sun out across the lands, imagining, assuming that somehow it can touch everyone with respect, appreciation, seeing everyone as valuable, everyone as a treasure and a marvelous expression of the preciousness of life, and wishing them all well. May all beings be happy, may all beings be safe, may all beings be peaceful, may all beings be free, and may each of us have a natural impulse, desire, to contribute to the welfare and happiness of those people we encounter. May all beings be well. Thank you.