

Guided Meditation: Love Without an Object

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Hello and welcome to the Insight Meditation Center, where I'm sitting. Delighted to be with you. Delighted to be thinking about this topic of this series. To be thinking about love, and today to be thinking about love... in some of its unusual manifestations, perhaps maybe some people would say the more profound manifestations. I want to start with a little, some analogies for it, that if you find yourself deeply calm, or you find yourself very peaceful, in a certain way that calm and that peace doesn't have an object. It isn't like it's focusing on something.

That's possible, to get calm looking at some nice piece of nature or something. But it's also possible just to have a sense of calm, that the mind is not thinking about anything. The mind is not focused on anything. There isn't exactly an object for attention. Now, the calm itself can be kind of an object, but the calm itself is not, doesn't have object. It just is there, kind of pervading our body or mind in some way.

And there can be something like vitality, feeling kind of just wonderfully, feeling our aliveness and vitality in a good way. After some nice workout and some nice physical activity, and there's not a, the vitality is not focused on an object. In a sense, it itself is not focused on a reason. The vitality itself doesn't have to have a purpose. It's just there coursing through us in a nice way. And so the same way, love can exist within us as a suffusive state of vitality, of aliveness, of kind of like calm is or vitality.

And it itself doesn't have to have an object. Sometimes there is an object that might have evoked its object, meaning maybe a person we know. But also it's possible for there to be a love that's there without the mind fixating on something or thinking about something or inspired by something. And many people associate love with love that has an object, something that we love. And sometimes we treat ourselves as that object, loving me, I love myself, self-love. And those can be quite wonderful to do that.

But there's more possible. And it's possible to have love, have *mettā* without an object. It's possible to have it just as a generalized state that spreads through us and beyond us. It's more like a wide mood, a wide state of emotion, it's more of a kind of something that's glowing inside of us, or just not even inside of us, is glowing. It doesn't have to have a reason. It doesn't have to have an object for the love.

And in fact, the absence of objects, the absence of the mind fixating on things, thinking about things, most thoughts have an object. We're thinking about something. And often that aboutness, there's a leaning into it or resisting it or pushing it or tightening around it. The relationship we have with our thoughts and what the thoughts are about can be quite complicated and sometimes quite stuck. We get glued to our thoughts because we're so concerned with the subject or the object of the thought, which is the object of attention then.

But deep meditation, *samādhi*, one of the purposes is to free us from fixation. Free us from being concerned with objects of attention. Free us from thinking that is about something. So that in the absence of fixation, in the not doing, in the emptiness, in the spaciousness, love and peace can exist within us. In a sense for no reason, in a sense without any object. It's just a state of vitality, a state of being that feels very meaningful, feels very purposeful, feels very connected, brings with it a deep feeling of belonging or rightness or ease, reassurance in being alive here and now.

Love without an object. Love without an object. So to assume a meditation posture and gently close your eyes. And is there any intuition inside of you of what I just talked about? Is there any way of relaxing, opening, trusting and radically open mind and heart that it's not chasing thoughts, not concerned about something that has room, awareness that has room for space and spaciousness.

Awareness that has space, room, for an inner vitality, however weak that might be, sense of aliveness, that has no object. Doesn't need anything for that vitality, sense of aliveness, to be present. And then as you breathe, breathing might be the object of your attention. But breathing itself has no object, it just is breathing. And the sensations of breathing in and of themselves exists without needing an object. They are not thinking about something.

And the awareness of those sensations, the sensing of sensations are almost the same thing. If they're sensations, they're sensing right where the sensations are. And to feel the sensations of breathing. Very simply, relaxing the thinking mind, relaxing the focusing mind, the attention that needs to have an object, in favor of the sensations of breathing that in and of themselves require no object. They are their own object.

As you exhale, relaxing the thinking mind. Relaxing the need and the pressure to think about anything at all. So the mind awareness opens wide. Awareness opens to the spaciousness of awareness, the wide space all around us. And awareness of space is just about the same as awareness without any object.

And as you exhale, relaxing the heart center. As you exhale, open the heart. So the heart has no object except the wide openness of a heart. Open to the space around you. And is there within you some love, some *mettā*, some warmth, kindness? That is a mood, a way of being that requires no object.

Requires, doesn't require you to think about anything or have a reason. Love that just is. Breathe with that. Open and spread that. Allow it to be there. And if it helps you stay connected with each breath, saying gently, softly the word love or *mettā* or yes to love without an object.

Love without an object. Might be very subtle. It might be just beyond the edges of the parts of life we're usually fixated on. Just beyond the edges, beyond the reach of fixation, preoccupation. If your mind is concerned with anything, thinking about anything, it means you're concerned with an object of attention, something you're thinking about.

Who are you? How are you? When you're not living in your thoughts, can there be love as a mood, as a mood, as a state that you swim in, rest in. And as we come to the end of this sitting, to feel whatever calm, saddleness there might be, and as you exhale, to relax more deeply, soften, let go, ease up, setting your heart at ease and sensing and feeling the subtle ways that the heart can be warm-hearted, kind-hearted, gentle-hearted, good-hearted, kind, loving, just as its nature, not for a reason, not for having an object to love.

Just like a heater produces warmth without thinking about what it's warming up around it and wishing that that warmth of yours, the love of yours, can spread out across the land in all directions. Like the morning light of the sun slowly lights up the landscape. So your warmth slowly warms up the world that you experience, the world that you know. As far as you can know, the knowing knows lovingly, wishing all beings well, hoping for the well-being, the joy, the comfort of all beings. May all beings be happy. May all beings be safe.

May all beings be peaceful. May all beings be free. And may we include in our field of love whatever comes into it, whoever comes within the range of what we can know and see. May all beings be loved in our field of awareness. Thank you.