

Guided Meditation: Mudita Samadhi 3

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Welcome to our meditation, and meditation on appreciative joy. And with all the *Brahma-vihāras*, all these divine forms of love in Buddhism, it can be supportive to know that it involves benefiting both self and others. There is a positive wish for others to be, to love others, to wish well for others. And here in appreciative joy, it's just hoping, wishing, aspiring, that others, that their joy, their happiness they already have, that it continues, that it grows, that it fills them, that it nourishes them. So really a positive regard for them. But we're also included in Buddhism.

There's not like a hard line that we only love other people. We're also allowed to feel the goodness of that intention, the goodness of appreciative joy. It brings a kind of lightness and openness and joy, pleasure to us to do it as well. And this becomes important because there's a feedback loop between how it nourishes us, how it delights us, how it brings pleasure here, especially meditative pleasure when we do the *samādhi* practice, and how that is in kind of a wonderful cycle loop, feedback loop, with the imagining, thinking about, hoping for the continued happiness of someone else. So we're kind of using both to really grow and get immersed, absorbed in this appreciative joy.

So today's topic is to have appreciative joy for a friend. Again, the principle is moving from what's easiest to what's more difficult, but that doesn't mean we have to do it fast. So choosing a friend who may be just a good friend, maybe a friend who's relatively very easy to share in their joy, celebrate with them when things are going well. But, you know, there are some complications. There are some, you know, things that you're troubled by with your friend, or worry about, or hold back, or resist, or they're not quite happy about.

And the idea here is to find a way, an appropriate way, to have an unconditional positive regard for your friend, so that in the circumstances where you gaze upon them from meditation,

you just want their well-being, their goodness, their success, their joy to continue. And that it just, remember a time when you did share with them something, and how happy you were that they were happy, things were going well for them. And sometimes when doing a friend, it's nice to have an image of them in your mind, or a memory of them, at a time when they were happy, when they were delighted. Or to imagine, what I've done sometimes, imagine them at home, if they had a good family life growing up. Imagine them sitting around the dining room table, the kitchen table, and with their family at a wonderful event, a birthday or birthday breakfast or something, where there were people who just had positive regard and happiness, and there was love.

So have this imagination, have this recall, think about your friend this way, some way, so that you get uplifted, you get a little bit delighted. And then that delight, that pleasure of that, then becomes the fuel for offering this to, you know, for wishing more for them. May they be happy. May they continue. And you're kind of surfing on or carried with this wish, this positive regard for them. May you be happy. May you be happy.

But doing it in a meditative way, contemplative way, where the discursive mind is getting quieter, so the whole mind, the whole heart, the whole of you can participate in a calm, relaxed, concentrated way with just this wish, just this desire for their happiness, supported by the image, supported by your intention, and supported by your positive regard. So to begin, maybe begin with a positive regard for yourself. That is expressed in the posture you assume. The meditation posture may be a place where something really important for you has a chance to surface, to be. Maybe the way that you hold yourself in meditation can be something that's supportive and meaningful for you.

Putting aside some of the not supportive ways that you live, you think, you're preoccupied, to just be here, positive regard for yourself, with care, with love. And within that positive regard, to feel your body, to open up into your body, as if positive regard is a positive sensing of the body, opening to the body, to make room for all of what you are to be cared for, to be gazed upon positively, or at least kindly. And then in a maybe tender way, gentle way, take a little bit fuller breaths, as if the gentle movements of breathing are movements of care, kindness. And then perhaps a little longer exhale than usual, maybe a little slower, is a trusting into the body, relaxing, letting the breathing return to normal.

And to bring to mind a friend, a good friend, maybe a friend who it's easy for you to feel friendship and warmth, a friend maybe that you have in the past been with them when they were happy, joyful, successful in some way. And you celebrated with them, or you shared deep appreciation and delight, joy, knowing that they have a capacity for happiness, peace,

joy, even with their challenges, thinking about how things are going well now with this friend, or find a friend for whom things are going relatively well now. So it's realistic for you to wish happiness, that their well-being continue, their happiness. And then gently, in a meditative way, in a way that quiets the thinking mind, the discursive mind, in a way that connects you to your well-wishing for your friend, say, or almost to say, maybe sub-vocally, may your well-being continue. May the good in your life continue. May your joy continue.

Usually it's good to choose just one phrase, so that you can gather, connect the phrase to the well-wishing, the image or memory of the person, and whatever pleasure comes with sitting here like this with the wish as you open. And as I've said, it's saying the phrase, and maybe the last word is on the beginning of the exhale. So there's a cruising, surfing, gliding with that goodwill, with that joy. As the exhale flows on, may your happiness continue. Or maybe a little more involved on the inhale, may your happiness continue.

And the exhale continues, is an affirmation of that, saying yes to that wish, letting there be a feedback loop between your wish for them to be happy and the well-being and pleasure that this meditation might give in you. Harmonizing your well-wishing in a rhythm of the phrases, harmonizing it with your breathing, and with every phrase, every breath settling or opening into the bodily experience of calm, pleasure, joy, as if the inhale is spreading it through your body and mind. And the exhale quiets the mind so there's more room and awareness to feel the joy, the well-wishing.

And as we come to the end of this sitting, to bring this friend or friend to mind again, and consider how in the privacy of meditation that it can be possible to love or have goodwill or well-wishing in an unconditional way, unreserved way. Your friend doesn't have to know this unreserved loving approach. Appreciation of their goodness and their success and their happiness doesn't require you to do anything, or to tell them, or put you in any compromising relationship to them. Just to take a few moments here to see how open the heart can be, and to open the heart wider.

And for a few minutes, without reservation, close to an unlimited well-wishing for all beings, where they're wishing that their joy, their success, their well-being continue and grows and expands. Whatever ways that people have well-being, even if it's small, may it grow, may it expand, and may your unconditional positive regard have infinite room, space, allowance of others' joy. May all beings grow in their well-being. May all beings be able to expand their circle of safety. May all beings expand their capacity for happiness and peace.

In whatever way people have found freedom from attachments and suffering, let's celebrate that, appreciate that, and aspire that it grows and expands. May all beings be happy. May

all beings be safe. May all beings be peaceful. May all beings be free. And may our positive regard contribute to that possibility. Thank you. Thank you.