

Dharmette: Love (68)-Balanced Love

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So hello, and welcome to this talk on equanimous love. So this is the fourth talk, kind of an introductory talk on this topic today, preparing for being able to really dip into a deeper meditation on *upekkhā*, the Pāli word for this equanimous love, loving equanimity. And one of the ways that equanimity manifests is as a non-reactivity, as not leaning forward and back, but being stable and steady here in the present moment. And there is a Pāli word, an ancient Buddhist word, that refers to this, and sometimes it's actually translated as equanimity. But in Pāli it means standing in the middle of this. So this is just whatever this is. And this here, standing in the middle of this here.

And to have this balance, this steadiness, sometimes this equanimous love, there is an analogy for it as standing on a hilltop above the fray, above the busy, maybe even agitated city below, seeing people rushing around and arguing, maybe in the market about prices or whatever it might be in the old way. But from the hilltop, not involved in any of the drama of the town below, but being able to gaze upon all of it with love. From the hilltop, it's not the time to do something for anyone. It's not the time to go down and help anyone. But there's something profound about gazing upon the human condition from the hilltop, seeing the hustle and bustle, the movements about, all the drama.

That's a little bit maybe like a grandparent, great-grandparent who's seen so much in life, sitting on a park bench on a hilltop and looking down at an elementary schoolyard or a kindergarten playground where kids are playing during recess. And all this drama happens there, but knowing that this is what happens and gazing upon it equanimously, not getting caught in the same dramas that the kids are caught in, and the fights and the loves and the, you know. So this ability to gaze upon things is supported by stability. And this is where our body is a great support, that if we can stay connected to our body, and not only connect to the body,

but feel and hold the body, be in the body in a way that brings stability, brings steadiness, as opposed to being disconnected from the body, being up in the head, and the body takes whatever posture that the head kind of puts it in. And the body kind of is not really present or not really offering any strength that's actually, you know, reassuring that things are okay, stable.

And so the tumbleweed of the mind just kind of rolls around freely, and we can feel quite impacted by the world, quite tender, quite fragile. And that if we can learn to really trust our body to provide stability, a balance. And sometimes in daily life, in meditation, it can come from how we position the body. There are some times the way we sit in a chair, the way we stand, is maybe crossing the legs and the arms, maybe sitting askew, maybe, you know, so that the torso is twisted, the torso is leaning one direction, you know, we're collapsed. And the body is not providing a steadiness, a stability.

But to take a posture that's upright, with the sitting bones stable in the chair or the feet, both soles firmly on the ground, and maybe even opening the chest, standing a little bit straight and tall. But in your way, to place the body in a clear, conscious, intentional posture that allows us to feel some stability in the body. And if it's helpful to have some external support, that's great. It could be that you stand behind a chair and put your hands on the backrest. It could be that you have maybe a railing next to you or something that you can hold on to or be with, but anything that allows you to feel like you can stand upright and tall and balanced, and then to feel.

Some people in sitting meditation in chairs will actually feel more stable if they have an armrest for their hands, and they put their hands up on the armrest, and it just kind of grounds them. And so there are many ways that different people can do it different ways, but to recruit the body and the posture as a place to discover and feel grounded, steady. And so know where in your body you most easily connect to that. Is it in the soles of the feet as you're standing, feeling the ground? Is it the sitting bones? Is it somehow in the lower torso? Is it the spine?

And then call on that. Remember that. Feel that in times of challenge, in times that you feel unstable, in times when you get caught and reactive. Come back. And then the breathing is very useful for this. There's something about consciously, intentionally breathing with, through whatever stability, physical power, stability, steadiness, groundedness we can find, and just let go into it, or breathe and be reminded of it.

Letting the breathing be steady, a steady rhythm that's nice and supportive. Maybe taking three deeper breaths, comfortably deeper breaths, and relaxing in the exhale, and that ex-

hale will be a little longer than usual. But feel like you're doing it in a steady way. There's a steady rhythm to those three breaths that's reassuring. And so whether you do this consciously as an exercise, or you allow it to happen in meditation by itself, meditation does bring a strong feeling of stability, steadiness, rootedness, groundedness, a real strong feeling to the whole body.

Yes, meditation. I'm here. No doubt about it. No question. And the sense of being really here is a strong sense. It's a strong, almost like a strong phenomenon that's really reminding us, yes, it's part of the conversation. It's part of our sense of being alive that provides a very different reference point than not having that.

And then from there, maybe we can tap into an equanimous love, a warmth, a deep appreciation, delight, a deep kind of kindness for others that has some of those qualities of steadiness, has the qualities of equanimity, has the quality of balance, where it's not leaning forward and back, it's not caught up in ideas of shoulds and shouldn'ts, not ideas of I can't and I can, just allowing this love to just be there, gazing upon the world kindly. And so *upekkhā*, the word for this kind of love, can mean to gaze upon, to look upon. And one of the ways that brings this kind of stability is to look upon things with wisdom, and that's the topic for tomorrow. But for today, it's looking upon things with balance, physical balance, emotional balance, mental balance, looking upon things with a kind of comfort that comes from knowing that we have nothing, at least for this day since I woke up, nothing to regret, nothing to be embarrassed about because I broke a precept.

This day I can rest and gaze upon the world kindly because I can rest in my balanced being. So you might want to think about or practice this through the day. You might see there are all kinds of moments through the day where you're waiting for something, nothing's happening. You could pull out your phone, look at it as just very important emails or news bulletins. Or you could spend time standing, sitting, closing your eyes, coming back to the place of balance. Come back to a place of steadiness. Come back to that place of rootedness here and now.

And just kind of periodically through the day, sprinkle it through the day, to come back to it, come back to it, be there. And see what happens through the day if you allow that to be kind of a theme of the day, that's going to inform you, that's going to have an influence on you through the day because you keep going back to it. And to become familiar with what that's like and to not give it up, not abandon that sense of stability and steadiness easily, is going to be a very important foundation for *upekkhā*, equanimous love. So thank you very much, and look forward to continuing tomorrow.