

Guided Meditation: Choosing Love

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Hello, my friends, and warm greetings, and welcome to this meditation session. And today we continue, or start really, the *samādhi* of equanimous love. One of the very important principles in Buddhism that supports this *upekkhā*, the equanimous love, is the idea that people make their own choices, that we can't make the choices for them, and we can love them. And so part of equanimity is saying, the choices you make are yours, and I wish you well. I care for you. My love remains.

And people make choices that are not the choices we want, or that we think are healthy or appropriate, but to grant people, give them the gift of autonomy. Many people want to feel somewhat autonomous, independent, able to make their own choices. And so the choices you make are yours. And then we have choices too. We make our own choices. Other people can have that kind of equanimous love for us.

But we make choices. And one of those choices is to love. One of those choices is to keep our heart open, not to close down, not to turn away, not to diminish our warmth, our kindness, our goodwill, for maybe any reason at all. Partly because, if to do so, it diminishes ourselves. To do so harms ourselves even sometimes.

And so to choose love, and that love can remain very private. No one needs to know it. So you're not going to make a mistake or make yourself maybe vulnerable to being taken advantage of. But we can choose love. We can choose to keep our heart open. And this ability to choose is central to Buddhist practice.

There are some times in Buddhism we talk a lot about not making any choices, just trusting and letting go and resting in some kind of broad accepting awareness. But to do that is a choice. We're operating on a choice that this is what we'll do. But we can choose love. And

for *samādhi*, part of what gets us really immersed, coursing in, just flowing in, swimming in, in the current of it all, is that we choose to love.

We choose to offer that. It's almost like it's the, you know, maybe there's a current which will carry us, but it's a weak current. To get the support of the current, we have to swim in. And so, we swim and then we feel the current pulling us and pushing us along. But we have to do that swimming. Maybe it's like body surfing. You have to swim hard enough to be able to be caught by the wave.

And so, there is this, what do we offer? A gathering, a focus, an intentionality that is not meant to be a strain, not meant to be tied to expectations, measuring ourselves, even being successful, but rather, yes, yes, here, I will love. The choices you make are yours, but I will love, yes, now. My heart will be open, my warmth, my goodness will be there, yes. And that *samādhi* is to kind of feel and sense the love which is a choice, the love which is a yes, yes, the love which is immersing ourselves, putting yourselves into this, not compromising love. Yes.

So, to assume a meditation posture and adjusting your posture a bit, so it has a little bit of intentionality in it, a little bit more like your posture is participating in the meditation rather than put offline during the meditation. And without strain, without tension, but to have a posture which is somewhat engaged, a posture of attention. And gently close your eyes. And slowly, gently taking some fuller breaths. So in the inhale, you feel your body more fully. The exhale, you relax your body.

Maybe on the inhale, feeling all that lives in your chest, in the heart center, choosing to just feel it and allow it to be there on the inhale, and choosing to soften it all on the exhale. On the inhale, feeling all that exists in your belly area without resistance, complaints, without seeing any problem, just to feel and sense that, to know. And on, as you exhale, to relax the belly, especially at the very end of the exhale. And then to, in the inhale, to feel your mind, your thinking mind. And on the inhale, simply choose the simplest way to just feel it as if it has permission to be the way it is.

Feel it with a broad awareness. And on the exhale, relaxing the thinking mind, appreciating the choice, the participation, the engagement, feeling and sensing on the inhale, relaxing the mind on the exhale without pressure. And then to drop into the place in your body that is the home for love, kindness, goodwill, when that is strong. Does it activate or awaken a certain part of your body in whatever degree of goodwill, kindness, love you have? Feel it on the inhale and relax into it on the exhale, and that you're participating, entering into the practice, the choice to feel, to relax into the love, perhaps finding a way to breathe, feel with

it.

The choice to feel your love is itself a form of love. The choice to relax into your inner warmth is itself a form of love or care. A choice of yes, yes to being here for this, yes for these minutes, to enter into the felt sense of love, kindness. Yes, as a choice of participation, feeling love on the inhale, relaxing into it on the exhale. And as you relax, to allow the thinking mind to be quieter.

And then with a quiet, calm thinking, think of some neutral person in your life. Some person maybe you don't even know their name, but you see them periodically. And you have no basis for liking or not liking, for being for or against. And see if your love can also open to that person as a basic form of friendliness, kindness, well-wishing, in the privacy of meditation, opening your heart wide to include this person into the care of your love. With every breath, as you breathe in, letting the sense of this person come into your heart. And as you exhale, let your love flow outwards to the person, like a shower of rain, the radiance of the sun.

And then as a way of participating more, almost like you're swimming to catch the wave, the currents, gently, quietly say, or with non-verbal thoughts express towards this person, Your choices are yours to make. I'll keep my love, goodwill, open and present for you. Unruffled love. Your choices are yours and I will love.

Saying these ideas to yourself, as a way of not holding back, as a way of, yes, settling more and more into just loving, non-reactive love, balanced love. Regardless of your choices, I will love. If loving with goodwill, compassion, appreciative joy, equanimity, is fully your choice, no one else's, for these minutes now, choose it fully, open your heart, say yes so you enter more deeply into a field of love, a state of love, an embodiment of love that's independent of what other people choose, say, do, equanimous love.

And then to let your attention and your love spread out into the world, equanimous love, a kind of independent love, not dependent on what others do, that's easiest in the privacy of meditation. And to allow this wide love become for a few moments universal, with no exceptions, no holding back, no fear, and wishing all beings happiness, choosing to maybe visualize the possibility of wide, broad happiness throughout the world. And may it be so, the love that wishes this, that has a yes, may all beings be happy, all beings be safe, may all beings be peaceful, may all beings be free, and thank you.