

Guided Meditation

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Hello everyone, and welcome to continue this theme for the week on the expressions of love and how they come into play for now in meditation practice. And this is also an expression of the *Dharma*, or the expressions of our experience of meditation. In different ways, we start feeling something about the depth of our life, some of the deepest motivations that we can have, some of the deepest values we want to live by, some of the deepest experiences of peace and freedom. And there's something about the depth of those experiences within us, deep in our hearts, deep in our being, that starts having more value than a lot of the other things that we spend our time doing. So much so that it becomes a priority, so much that it becomes an orientation that we want to live by and stay close to, stay in touch with.

And I'm fond of words and etymologies, and the word commitment has the word mitten in it, having to do with hand or fingers. And so a commitment is what we want it to be in touch with. A vow is where we want our life to be centered on, based on. And so with love, a time comes when we discover this deep capacity for love that is kind of almost seemingly inherent in who we are and independent from the conditions of the world, in the sense that the love is constant. The love is something we want to come from.

And so at some point there becomes something like a resolve, a commitment, a dedication, a commitment, a kind of a vow we make that we say, this is so important that I'm going to base my life on it. I'm going to base my way I live for it, in it. And certainly this was true for me in a way that was surprising, that as I did this *Dharma* practice, sometimes this deep sense of inner vow. Nothing that I had to do, nothing that was my requirement, but it was in the heart's call, the call, the call in the heart.

So one expression of this deep dharmic love is that there's a call, an aspiration, a dedication, that coming from this love is the most natural and appropriate and meaningful way to be in

the world. It's not a construction, it's not making something up. But this gives life meaning, purpose, agency, identity. This provides life with the power of healing and community and kinship. This is valuable.

So to begin this meditation today by considering: What is it, what in the *Dharma*, what in the meditation, what in mindfulness, what in your spiritual life within you is the most important? And is that most important? Does it have a place inside? Is something alive inside of you that is an expression of that depth, purpose?

Gently closing your eyes if they're not, and gently seeing if you can have your breathing. Breathe along with this depth of meaning, purpose, value. Even if you're not sure or can't articulate what it is, maybe there's a feeling for it. And maybe taking a few deeper, fuller breaths and relaxing deeply in, letting go of your thoughts, letting go of anything that takes you away from the present moment, breathing mindfully from the deepest place you know, here and now.

And if you feel yourself deeper than your thoughts, deeper than your memories or conversations you're having in your head, deep within you, is there a reservoir, peace, love, of inner goodness for which being in touch with is valuable, that you'd like to be more in touch with more often. And in these minutes of meditation, stay in touch. Listen to the call to be present to that which is deepest within you, that which helps you feel settled, connected, at home in something important within.

And for those of you who've been along for these many months that we've been exploring love, where inside of you is the deepest form of love that's your way of loving? Not as an idea, not as a goal right now, but what is it inside of you that you know that for you and your way is the most meaningful form of love that flows from you inside? And is there any way that you want to follow the call of that love, be committed to that form of love, or to stay in touch with it, have it at the center, have it as an orientation for living your life? And if so, is that wish part of the love, or is it a bridge to the love?

And as we come to the end of this meditation, is there some place within, some way in your love, in your care, in your heart, from which you can gaze upon the world kindly, from which there's a love that cares for others, cares for their well-being, their welfare and happiness, some place deep inside that smiles at the love that wishes everyone well.

May all beings be happy. May all beings be safe. May all beings be peaceful. May all beings be free. And may the depth of our own deep wishes for the welfare of the world

| find a way to be expressed in how we live our life.

Thank you.