# Brahmavihārā Day #12

Carol Wilson · Notable Dhamma Teachers — Carol Wilson · 44:59

This afternoon is the last afternoon that we'll be guiding the metta. We move to compassion tomorrow, just so you know.

I thought today we would, of course, formally continue with all beings. But I had the feeling not to give any new or different specific instructions about that. Rather, since it's the last day we'll all be doing this together at this time, I wanted to let you find your own way. You can start with all beings if you like, but more than that, just let yourself play in the realm of metta in the way that calls you—the way that feels the most energized, connected, and easiest for you.

Even as gently as it may be, you may try to bring your experience along as we're saying in the instructions, even though we keep saying, "Find your own way." Just the fact that someone's up here saying "Now, radiating metta to all beings" is, in a sense, asking you to try that—which is great. That's why we say it. We want you to try it. But I thought today I would mention all beings and then give you the space where you don't have to even have a little sense of trying to match any instruction. Just use this as a free metta period. Hopefully you can do that at other times too.

All I'll say about all beings is that there are many ways of doing it, both formally and informally. One of the most accessible to many of us is the way Brian offered it, which is really just sending or radiating or allowing the metta to move in the different directions—north, south, east, west, above, below. I like that myself.

There are other ways, depending on how your mind works, where you just keep saying, "May all beings be happy. May all living beings, may all creatures..." and you go through a whole list. I'm going to spare you because it gets very wordy, but in a longer period, sometimes it's useful.

For many people—and I know it's come up—sometimes saying the phrases and the words is useful, but sometimes it's actually just too much action. I remember hearing about Venerable Anālayo, the German Theravāda monk, describing his way of doing metta. He said he disliked the word-heavy way of doing metta. He described something which I thought sounded lovely as a way to play with it: just beginning a metta period by imagining in your heart, in the center of your chest, a kind of warmth—a gentle, friendly, warm energy. This works for people who don't get all tight around trying to visualize. Just a warm energy, almost like a gentle, warm lantern in your chest.

Then just allowing it to come out, as if you want to send it, letting it go out in one direction. He had the image of a lantern or lamp, the old-fashioned kind that has screens you can put down. When you want to

allow the loving-kindness to move out to the front of you, you just lift the screen, the little wall, up from that side, and it just goes out. This is different from you having to make it happen. You're just lifting up the wall and letting it go out. And then the same for each different direction.

Just playing. Playing with the sense of sending out this energy of friendliness and warmth.

For me, when I'm thinking of all beings, sometimes I just say, "May all beings be well, happy, and peaceful," and imagine it going in all directions simultaneously, just radiating out in a circle. I learned that from Goenka in my first retreats. Sometimes I do the specific directions, like north—I forgot to check before I came in here. I am really directionally challenged. Brian probably helped you, right? If you know, that's all that matters. I don't have to know. In front, behind, right, left.

Then I'll imagine to the north different beings that pop up in my mind, like polar bears, or humans I know who live to the north, or ones that I've read about. Ones that are happy, ones that are sad, things that are going on—don't get too far down that road—but animals, whatever. Overhead, of course, people going over in planes, or hot air balloons.

I actually love teaching this where I teach in Switzerland because it's about 4,000 feet up, and it's a place where hang gliders are just going off all the time. There are literally people drifting over your head most of the day. So it's a very literal "those above me, safe and protected"—literally, may they be safe and protected. It's kind of fun.

I'm just throwing out ideas because I don't want to guide the whole thing. I want to let you see and be with your own way of accessing loving-kindness.

So, go.

Finding for yourself—I'm sure you already know, but doing it consciously. What helps you relax into this moment? What helps you come out of contention with this moment?

If all beings is easy for you, as for some people it's the easiest, go ahead and start there. If it's difficult or too abstract, then of course starting where it is easiest—self, benefactor, neutral, whatever's easiest.

When you're ready, just start letting it go out to all beings, finding your own way in this, however it connects and is meaningful for you. If you find you're losing the thread or jumping around too much, then come back to simplicity. Always supportive. Just get clear to whom you're offering this well-wishing in this moment. Sometimes with all beings we kind of lose the energy—it's so vast. So get simple and then open up again, if that's helpful.

In the last few moments of this sitting, if you would like—you certainly don't have to—but I just invite anyone who'd like to, instead of all beings, to extend this warmth, this friendly, accepting kindness first to all of us here in this room. And just imagine it expanding out to include all of your fellow retreatants and all of the retreat support staff here—the managers, the cooks, the whole Spirit Rock, office workers, the

caretakers, maintenance, housekeeping, teachers—just everybody. All of us together, coming together to make this particular time be what it is.

May we all be well, happy, and peaceful. May we all love and accept ourselves just as we are. May we all be safe from inner and outer harm. May we all be able to care for ourselves and one another happily in this world.

And may the merits of our wholesome intentions, our sincere practice together, be shared with all beings everywhere, in all phases of life.

May all beings be safe and protected. May all beings be happy. May all beings be healthy and well. May all beings know ease of well-being.

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