Mettā and Meditation

Carol Wilson · Notable Dhamma Teachers — Carol Wilson · 13:20

Tonight, in the loving-kindness practice, we'll open to sending loving-kindness to all beings. There are various ways to do this, and we'll only do it one way tonight, which will be directionally.

But still, we start in the usual way. Start with yourself. After some moments, I'll suggest going to either a benefactor or friend—whatever category has been the easiest for you to connect with. And then from that, I'll guide us into all beings in the various directions.

Just a word as we get to all beings: as you're radiating directions, sending these wishes to all beings in a particular direction, moving out—if at any time you find, not just that you lose connection a little bit (of course that's normal), but that in moving into all beings, after some time you really start to feel a bit lost, almost as if the energy's overextended—then that's a sign to just come back again to the easiest: self, benefactor, friend. Recollect the attention, the sense of well-wishing, the focus, and then again you can open up to all beings. So continuing to use this flexible approach.

As always, beginning with ourself, connecting with the sense of your body. Presence in this body, in this moment, in this space. Take a moment to recollect, to connect, turn your attention to some wholesome, some skillful or beautiful aspect of yourself—thought, word, or deed.

For some people, the forgiveness practice is a good way to start: forgiving oneself for any harm, offering forgiveness to those who have harmed us, asking forgiveness from those we have harmed.

And then in your own time, beginning the loving-kindness to yourself, using your own phrases, making sure you connect with either a felt physical sense, a feeling quality, or a mental image. Connect with yourself and then begin the loving-kindness.

Now moving to whichever has been easiest for you—either benefactor, mentor, or friend. Take a moment to connect with their wholesome, their beautiful qualities. And when you feel that sense of openness, of inclusion, begin offering one phrase at a time. Gently, steadily, not leaning forward or trying to make something happen. Just settle back. Let the phrase arise from within the heart area. And just offer it as a gift.

Now to begin radiating loving-kindness to all beings. Begin by imagining sending these waves of loving energy in the whole quadrant to the north, which is behind you, in front of me. You might find different ways your mind connects, your heart connects. For example, just imagine sending this energy widening and widening and widening behind you. Sometimes I'll imagine different beings I know to the north—animals or people. Sometimes just kinesthetically feeling the sense of sending this well-wishing in

that direction. Sometimes categories of beings might pop up: all females in the north, all males. But we use the same phrases, just really kinesthetically sending the energy to the north, one phrase at a time.

May all beings in the north be safe and protected from inner and outer harm. May all beings in the north be happy and peaceful. May all beings to the north be healthy and well. May all beings to the north live with ease of well-being.

You might just start small—just the people behind you—and let it widen out. Just experiment, see how it feels, what helps you connect.

Now sending loving-kindness to all beings to the east, to your left towards the forest. All beings includes humans, animals, unknown beings in other realms, those we like, those we find difficult, mostly those we don't know. You can either imagine geographically all areas to the east covering the whole earth and beyond, or various specific beings, using the phrases to anchor, connect your attention, your energy in the present moment.

Now all beings in the south, towards the altar. Beings most immediately to your south, extending infinitely through this whole earth and beyond, the whole universe. All beings in all realms, in all conditions, towards the south.

And all beings to the west, towards Pleasant Street. People in the cities to the west, in the country. People driving on roads, traveling, healthy, in hospitals. All the animals, in various stages of being born and dying. The west, here in Barre, throughout the state, and on infinitely. When you lose the thread, come back to yourself or benefactor or friend, recollect the energy, and again open up to all beings to the west.

And then all beings above. Of course that's obviously birds and insects, humans going over in airplanes, but also the infinity of unknown beings above us through the atmosphere and beyond. There's no being left out. Mettā being total inclusion, not making separation. Simple connection.

And then all beings below.

Just imagining immediately below us, through the earth, the animals that live and burrow in the earth, in the seas, all the way through the earth to the other side and beyond. May all beings below be safe and protected.

And just for the last moments, sending this radiating, this loving energy outward in all directions. Imagine it spreading out from your heart center, radiating in all directions—this warmth, this inclusion that wishes safety, happiness, health and well-being to all beings in all realms, in all conditions.

May all beings everywhere be happy.

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