



**Wednesday Small Group (via ZOOM!)  
Session on Lovingkindness/Loving Kindness  
Starr King Unitarian Universalist Church, Hayward, CA, 24 February 2021, 1:30 PM**

**CHALICE LIGHTING**

Kindness in words creates confidence. Kindness in thinking creates profoundness. Kindness in giving creates love.

*Lao Tzu*

We all are so deeply interconnected; we have no option but to love all. Be kind and do good for any one and that will be reflected. The ripples of the kind heart are the highest blessings of the Universe.

*Amit Ray*

**SONG: Lovingkindness Song (Charity Kahn and The Jamband)**

**<[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qsx\\_n7t3hk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qsx_n7t3hk)>**

**OPENING WORDS**

**1 min**

There is a plurality to our being: We are one heart with many parts. We are one psyche holding many minds and many psychologies. This opens doors, and they are doors that urgently need opening ... while we are not responsible for the conditioning that's brought us where we are now, we are indeed accountable for what we do with it.

*Ralph De La Rosa*

**MEDITATION / CENTERING**

**6 min**

The first sound of the gong brings us to silence. Please take time to center yourself, and temporarily push aside whatever might be preventing you from participating fully in today's session.

**<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tACZ8uF5XIQ>>**

The second sound of the gong returns us to each other's presence.

**CHECK-IN (2 ROUNDS)**

**40 min**

Please share some thing(s) about your life since last we met. How are YOU feeling today?

**INTRODUCTORY CONSIDERATIONS**

**15 min**

**Definitions and Context**

From Wikipedia: Mettā meditation, or loving-kindness meditation, is the practice concerned with the cultivation of Mettā, i.e. benevolence, kindness, and amity.

Academics have discerned two different types of practices: those that focus on the relief of suffering, and those that focus on wishing a being happiness. Lovingkindness meditation gradually increases in difficulty

with respect to the targets that receive the practitioner's compassion or loving-kindness. At first the practitioner targets "oneself, then loved ones, neutral ones, difficult ones, and finally all beings."

According to Sharon Salzberg, a foremost practitioner and teacher of *Mettā*: Lovingkindness, or *mettā* meditation, is a traditional Buddhist practice that helps us to move from a sense of dislocation and isolation into a more of a connection with ourselves and, ultimately, with all beings everywhere. It's classically taught with three other practices; namely, compassion; sympathetic joy--feeling delighted in another's happiness rather than feeling jealous; and equanimity, or balance of mind. All four of these qualities can be experienced within any one of them. Lovingkindness, for example, has strands of compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity within it.

### **The Paradox of Kindness**

In their 2009 book, *On Kindness*, Adam Phillips & Barbara Taylor state that "Kindness...not sexuality, not violence, not money—has become our forbidden pleasure." In their discussion, they reveal the paradoxical nature of kindness: "The pleasure of kindness is that it connects us with others; but the terror of kindness is that it makes us too immediately aware of our own and other peoples' vulnerabilities [and] failures."

### **SONG: Love is Kind (Traditional rowing shanty, sung by the Clancy Brothers)**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bc9FdSnDISA>

### **QUOTES ABOUT KINDNESS AND LOVINGKINDNESS**

**10 min**

Monks, even if bandits were to savagely sever you, limb by limb, with a double-handled saw, even then, whoever of you harbors ill will at heart would not be upholding my Teaching. Monks, even in such a situation you should train yourselves thus: Neither shall our minds be affected by this, nor for this matter shall we give vent to evil words, but we shall remain full of concern and pity, with a mind of love, and we shall not give in to hatred. On the contrary, we shall live projecting thoughts of universal love to those very persons, making them as well as the whole world the object of our thoughts of universal love — thoughts that have grown great, exalted and measureless. We shall dwell radiating these thoughts which are void of hostility and ill will. It is in this way, monks, that you should train yourselves.

*Gautama Buddha*

The unification [of mind] around Insight is ... profound ... and permanent. When temporary unification around a shared intention fades, each sub-mind operates as a separate entity, constrained by and at the mercy of the mind-system as a whole. Therefore, individual sub-minds strive to preserve their autonomy and, as much as possible, direct the resources of the mind-system toward their individual goals. Yet after Insight, the various sub-minds become unified around a shared Insight into impermanence, emptiness, suffering, no-Self, and interconnectedness. From this flow a corresponding set of shared values: harmlessness, compassion, and loving-kindness. Now each sub-mind operates as an independent part of a much greater whole, working for the good of that whole. This allows each sub-mind to do its job effectively, without running into fundamental conflicts with other sub-minds. When enough of the mind-system has undergone this transformation, we're able to function as an individual person while simultaneously perceiving ourselves as part of an indivisible and inconceivably greater whole.

*Culadasa (John Yates—author of The Mind Illuminated: A Complete Meditation Guide Integrating Buddhist Wisdom and Brain Science)*

If there is love, there is hope that one may have real families, real brotherhood, real equanimity, real peace. If the love within your mind is lost and you see other beings as enemies, then no matter how much knowledge or education or material comfort you have, only suffering and confusion will ensue

*Dalai Lama XIV*

So we have to develop a very open loving attitude in our relationships with people. With everybody we meet, whether they are nice to us or not, we must have that initial feeling of “May you be well and happy”. Just a good feeling. It doesn’t mean we have to be stupid or that we can’t see that some people are bad or are going to cheat us. To be non-judgemental doesn’t mean that we are not discriminating. It means that we see the situation very clearly, we see clearly the kind of person before us, but we don’t react with anger. We don’t have to allow ourselves to be pushed around, we don’t have to be doormats for others to wipe their feet on. We can be very clear about what this person’s motivation is; we see it, and so can’t be trapped, cheated or abused.”

*Jetsunma Tenzin Palmo*

*From Bremer Acosta. Please read, one paragraph per person.*

We have traded our intimacy for social media, our romantic bonds for dating matches on apps, our societal truth for the propaganda of corporate interests, our spiritual questioning for dogmatism, our intellectual curiosity for standardized tests and grading, our inner voices for the opinions of celebrities and hustler gurus and politicians, our mindfulness for algorithmic distractions and outrage, our inborn need to belong to communities for ideological bubbles, our trust in scientific evidence for the attractive lies of false leaders, our solitude for public exhibitionism.

We have ignored the hunter-gatherer wisdom of our past, obedient now to the myth of progress.

But we must remember who we are and where we came from.

We are animals born into mystery, looking up at the stars. Uncertain in ourselves, not knowing where we are heading. We exist with the same bodies, the same brains, as *Homo sapiens* from thousands of years past, roaming on the plains, hunting in forests and by the sea, foraging together in small bands.

Except now, our technology is exponentially increasing at a scale that we cannot predict.

We are overwhelmed with information; lost in a matrix that we do not understand.

Our civilizational “progress” is built on the bones of the indigenous and the poor and the powerless.

Our “progress” comes at the expense of our land, and oceans, and air.

We are reaching beyond what we can globally sustain. Former empires have perished from their unrestrained greed for more resources. They were limited in past ages by geography and capacity, collapsing in regions, and not over the entire planet.

What will be the cost of our progress?

We have grown arrogant in our comfort, hardened away from our compassion, believing that our reality is the only reality.

Yet even at our most uncertain, there are still those saints who are unknown and nameless, who help even when they do not need to help.

They often are not rich, don't have their profiles written up in magazines, and will never win any prestigious awards.

They may have shared their last bit of food while already surviving on so little. They may have cherished the disheartened, shown warmth to the neglected, tended to the diseased and dying, spoken kindly to the hopeless.

They do not tremble in silence while the wheels of prejudice crush over their land.

Withering what was once fertile into pale death and smoke.

They tend to what they love, to what they serve.

They help, even when they could fall back into ignorance, even when they could prosper through easy greed, even when they could compromise their values, conforming into groupthink for the illusion of security.

They help.

The highest goodness is like water. Water is beneficial to all things ... It stays in places which others despise. Therefore it is near Tao. The weakest things in the world can overmatch the strongest things in the world. Nothing in the world can be compared to water for its weak and yielding nature; yet in attacking the hard and strong nothing proves better than water. For there is no alternative to it. The weak can overcome and the yielding can overcome the hard. This all the world knows but does not practice. This again is the practice of 'wu-wel' and nonviolence. Water may be weak, pliable, fluid, but its action is not one of running away from an obstacle. On the contrary, it gives at the point of resistance, envelopes the object and passes beyond it.

*J.C. Cooper*

Imagine walking along a sidewalk with your arms full of groceries, and someone roughly bumps into you so that you fall and your groceries are strewn over the ground. As you rise up from the puddle of broken eggs and tomato juice, you are ready to shout out, 'You idiot! What's wrong with you? Are you blind?' But just before you can catch your breath to speak, you see that the person who bumped into you is actually blind. He, too, is sprawled in the spilled groceries, and your anger vanishes in an instant, to be replaced by sympathetic concern: 'Are you hurt? Can I help you up?' Our situation is like that. When we clearly realize that the source of disharmony and misery in the world is ignorance, we can open the door of wisdom and compassion.

*B. Alan Wallace*

**PREPARATION FOR GROUP REFLECTION . 1 min**

**Read the questions for reflection, one by one.**

**BREAK, CONCURRENT WITH SONG: One Love (U2): : 5 min**

**<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YjRxrYxrxX0>>**

**GROUP REFLECTION 40 min**

**Questions For Reflection**

Talk for your allotted, uninterrupted time on whichever of the following questions calls to you

1. Do you meditate? If yes, do you practice lovingkindness meditation? Why or why not?
2. Have you successfully moved beyond a meditation practice to incorporating the principles and practices into your daily life? Describe how that went?
3. Have you ever run into a situation where your immediate, emotional reaction was interrupted by sudden knowledge or intuition, and your reaction completely changed? Describe the situation. When it was over, did it affect how you reacted in similar situations that followed?
4. If we accept that lovingkindness develops gradually from yourself, to a loved one, to a neutral person, to a difficult person, to all people, and to all beings, even if you practice it regularly, where are you really in being able to extend metta to all beings? What would it take to move you to the next step?
5. Describe an experience in which you have been kind to others or an experience in which others have been kind to you. Does doing kindnesses expose the doer's weaknesses and vulnerabilities?
6. When offering a kindness to another person, do you think the consequences are unpredictable? Are you aware of risks? What are those risks? Have you attempted to be kind to another only to have that person rebuke you in some manner?
7. How can kindness be the "cause of all anxiety"? Is it because we feel *obligated* to be kind and then fall short? Have you found yourself rationalizing to avoid an opportunity to do a kindness? What are your "favorite" rationalizations? How can they be countered?
8. Which of the ideas expressed in the quotes resonated with you? Turned you off? What types of information would you need in order to change your mind, and is obtaining that information worth exploring?

**SONG: Try a Little Kindness (sung by Mary McKee and The Genesis)**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gJTUreY68RQ>

#### **SESSION FEEDBACK AND FUTURE PLANS**

**10 min**

- How did the session go for you?
- Do we need to make any format changes to make these sessions more useful to you?
- Rebuilding and Renewing our Covenant(s)

#### **EXTINGUISH CHALICE / CLOSING WORDS**

**1 min**

When kindness has left people, even for a few moments, we become afraid of them as if their reason had left them. When it has left a place where we have always found it, it is like shipwreck; we drop from security into something malevolent and bottomless.

*Willa Cather*