

What the Buddha Taught

Love and Joy

Love (metta) and sympathetic joy (mudita) are two of the beautiful emotions we want to cultivate. In this lesson we'll also discuss appropriate effort in developing our meditation practice.

Review

So far, we have touched on:

- a) the First Noble Truth, which is suffering. The goal of our meditation practice is to eliminate suffering.
- b) the Second Noble Truth, which is that craving/attachment, especially of sensual pleasures, is the cause of suffering
- c) the Third Noble Truth, which is that there is an end to suffering when we let go of craving.
- d) the Fourth Noble Truth, which is the Path or method the Buddha described of how to let go of craving and dispel ignorance so that suffering can be eliminated.
- e) how anger is craving for the absence of something we don't like. We learned two methods to let go of anger: "The Peace Treaty" and the "holding technique".
- f) how ignorance of the Four Noble Truths and ignorance of the three characteristics of all conditioned things is the cause of craving. The

three characteristics are impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and selflessness. Insight is the opposite of ignorance.

g) the First Foundation of Mindfulness, which is the body. We learned about calming meditation on the breath and meditation on the postures of the body. The reason we do calming meditation is to calm our mind enough so that our mind is capable of obtaining insight. Clear comprehension is part of the First Foundation and is necessary for insight into suffering and its release.

h) the Second Foundation of Mindfulness, which is vedana. Vedana are the feelings of pleasant, unpleasant and neutral that accompany every sensory experience. We learned an insight meditation using vedana.

i) moment by moment mindfulness during the day. During insight meditation and moment by moment mindfulness during the day, we start to see the times when greed/attachment arise and thus we gain insight into how we create our own suffering.

Third Foundation of Mindfulness

The Third Foundation is consciousness and mental states. These two things cannot be separated. They always arise together. Our mental states “colour” our consciousness.

Mental states include things like:

- perception, intention (volition) and one-pointedness
- unwholesome states like restlessness and shamelessness, stinginess, false assumptions, greed, vanity, envy, hatred, worry
- wholesome states such as mindfulness, lightness, non-resistance, metta, eqanimity, compassion, sympathetic joy.

There are 52 identified mental states but there is no need to memorize the list; just name what you are experiencing.

The Four Efforts

1. The effort to prevent the arising of unwholesome states.
2. The effort to let go of unwholesome states that arise
3. The effort to cultivate wholesome states
4. The effort to maintain and develop wholesome states

The Third Foundation of Mindfulness is of consciousness and mental states. We want to be mindful of not allowing the unwholesome states to arise in our consciousness. So we practice the first effort. But when unwholesome states inevitably do arise, we need to be mindful of their presence so that we can engage the second effort to let them go. But we do not need to be passive about what arises in our mind. We can deliberately cultivate the arising of wholesome states, effort three. And when a wholesome state does arise, we make the fourth effort to maintain and develop it in our consciousness.

The first effort uses mindfulness. In sitting practice, if we are mindful of our breath, there isn't space for unwholesome states to arise. In daily life, if we are mindful of what we are doing there isn't space for unwholesome states to arise.

For the second effort, as soon as you notice that an unwholesome state has arisen, return your mindfulness to what you were previously focusing on. (Re-read the notes on calming meditation from session one). Or you can use the insight practice of vedana to let go of the unwholesome state. (Re-read the notes from session three). There are other methods to do the second effort. We will be studying these next session.

This session we are going to learn two methods to cultivate wholesome states. First we will learn a method to cultivate metta which is loving friendliness. And secondly we will learn how to practice sympathetic joy.

4. Metta : loving friendliness

Metta is unconditional love. It has the quality of being boundless or illimitable. This means there are no boundaries or limits on who the love is sent to. There is a beautiful metta chant which uses the words of the Buddha. See the resources pages. Metta is a feeling. There are many methods that have been devised to help cultivate metta. This session we will be using a method of repeating phrases, with the intent of generating metta . The important thing is having the intent. The fruit (the actual experience of metta), if not immediately present, will eventually follow. We will be using Bhante Gunaratana's method.

METTA MEDITATION (LOVING FRIENDLINESS MEDITATION)

as taught by Bhante Gunaratana

PART ONE

Section one:

May I be well / May I be happy / May I be peaceful / May I be loving /
May I be calm / May I be safe

May no problems come to me / May no difficulties come to me / May no
harm come to me / May I meet with spiritual success

Sitting meditation: Use all 10 phrases. Say the first phrase with 3 in breaths and 3 out breaths (ie. 6 times), then move onto the second phrase. Focus on the touch of your breath at your nostril as you say the phrases. Also notice the experience of what you are referring to with the words in your body. For example, when you say, "May I be well", notice the feeling of wellness in your body. Maybe not all of your body feels well, but notice if there is some part of your body that feels well. Do this for all the phrases. Continue repeating the sequence of phrases until your mind is calm and concentrated.

Walking meditation: Use the first 6 phrases only. Use 3 step walking and one phrase with each movement. The steps are: lift the foot / move the foot forward / place the foot down. Therefore, all 6 phrases will be said each 2 steps. After sitting meditation, do walking meditation a few times back and forth in your room (or as long as you wish), to act as a transition from still sitting to the movement of living.

Section two:

Once you have learned the phrases of section one, you can start to practice these of section two. Once you know these well, combine sections one and two.

May I have the patience / May I have the courage / May I have the strength / May I have the determination / May I have the inner clarity / May I have the wisdom / To meet and overcome the inevitable problems of life / To meet and overcome the inevitable difficulties of life / To meet and overcome the inevitable discouragements of life / To meet and overcome the inevitable failures of life

Section three:

Once you know sections one and two well, practice this section and then put all three sections together.

May my whole heart be filled with loving friendliness / May all the cells of my body be filled with loving friendliness / May all the levels of my consciousness be purified with loving friendliness / May I build a healthy, happy aura of loving friendliness all around me / May I be protected.

PART TWO

Once you are able to send and receive love to yourself, you can start to send it to your loved ones, in addition to sending it to yourself. So repeat the same phrases as above. Just substitute **May my loved ones** or **May they** for **I**.

PART THREE

Next, you can add, **To all those towards whom I have neutral feelings**, may **they** be well, may **they** be happy etc.

PART FOUR

When you are ready, you can add, **To those that I have harmed or have harmed me**, may they be well, etc. You may have to do this part in stages ie. you may be able to send loving friendliness to some people who have harmed you but not all. That is fine. Start with those that you can and add others when you feel ready. Remember that the basic purpose of this meditation is to allow you to let go of suffering. If you carry around anger in your heart, you suffer. If you can let it go, you can experience peace. And just think....if those who have harmed you are happy and peaceful and patient and meet with spiritual success, they would no longer be harmful to you.

PART FIVE

May all beings be well etc. This category includes plants and animals as well as people.

So once you have learned all the phrases and practiced the various parts, you can recite all the parts (as much as you can for part four) in a single sitting meditation session. After sitting, it is helpful to do some walking meditation using the first 6 phrases but for all the 5 parts. This is a nice way to transition from using the phrases in the stillness of sitting to using them in the hurly burley of life.

Therefore, once your sitting and walking practice is over for the day, continue to roll the first 6 phrases (and others if you like) over and over in your mind, accompanying everything you do while awake (when your mind is not otherwise occupied). So the phrases can be said while eating, walking, showering, driving, cooking etc. It is especially beautiful to be thinking, **May you be well, may you be happy** etc as you pass people on the street or in the hall.

The phrases can be used as antidotes. If you are feeling agitated, you can substitute the phrase **May I be calm** for the agitating thoughts. If you are feeling angry you can substitute **May I be loving** or **May I have the wisdom to meet and overcome the inevitable difficulties of life**. Once the phrases have helped you to feel calm, you can then, with wisdom, determine how to respond or not respond to what has arisen. Feel free to alter the phrases to use words that are meaningful to you. And add phrases if that is helpful.

5. Sympathetic Joy (Mudita)

This is another boundless or illimitable mental state. It means feeling joy for the happiness of others. It can be practiced in the same way that you practice metta, leaving out the first step of directing it to yourself as, traditionally, sympathetic joy is practiced in sympathy with others. So you start by thinking of someone you love and you focus on a particular source of joy in their life. Let yourself feel happy as you image their happiness. If it's helpful, you can repeat phrases such as, "May your happiness and good fortune not leave you" or "May your happiness not diminish" or "May your good fortune continue". As you say these phrases, feel the happiness they generate within you.

Now do the same thinking of a neutral person and then thinking of

someone towards whom you have negative feelings and finally, thinking of all beings. Once you are able to feel sympathetic joy towards your “enemies” you will experience the boundless or illimitable aspect of this mental state.

If envy arises when you think of the happiness of another, attempt to let it go and replace it with sympathetic joy. Realize that just as you wish to be happy, so do all other beings wish to be happy. So, in this moment, when you hear that another is happy, if you have the intent of feeling happy for them, even if you cannot feel it at this time, you are planting a seed which will eventually bear fruit.

6. Developing a meditation practice

So, how do you put this all together into a daily meditation practice? Here are some suggestions:

1. Do a daily sitting practice, starting with at least a brief metta meditation or the chanting of metta.
2. Then you can switch to a stillness meditation on the breath or you can continue to develop stillness by staying with the metta meditation.
3. If you are agitated or sleepy, do walking meditation instead.
4. After you feel some initial calming, you can choose to stay with the stillness meditation (breath or metta) some days, and other days you can switch to mindfulness of vedana or sympathetic joy meditation or other meditations we will be learning, depending on what feels necessary or useful for you that day.
4. During waking hours, attempt to stay mindful of your breath and have moment by moment mindfulness of whatever you are doing. But also be aware of vedana and craving. Recognize this as suffering and use any methods that have been taught to let go of the craving.
5. Re-read the handouts from the sessions again and again, to remind yourself of the teachings so that they are in your mind when craving arises.
6. Read books on Dhamma (the teachings of the Buddha) for the same reason.

7. Attend the meditation group to receive the teachings and to receive support from the other meditators.

8. Attend a retreat or day of mindfulness or visit the monastery.