
Mettā, The Practice of Loving Kindness

The practice of loving kindness is taught as a principle of all major religions and philosophies. In the Christian tradition, we would recognize it as "do unto others as you would have them do unto you". Or, more generally, it would be "love one another". Specifically the King James Version of the bible says, "This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you." (John 15:12) In the real world, this does not seem to something that people readily do. The world seems to be full of people, particularly leaders of countries, religions and factions that take exception to what someone else is doing. Using the Law of Attraction as the microscope, what you concentrate on, is what you get. Therefore antagonism, anger, aggression and violence just attract more of the same.

The practice of Mettā from the Theravāda Buddhist practice is about unconditional and detached loving kindness to all things. As a form of meditation, this practice is about stilling ones mind to feel the heart - the beating of the heart, the warmth of the heart - to the radiation of the warmth and the love outward. The words that fit with this meditation are significant in they are independent of self interest and reflect the best wishes one could have for all. The words, "I wish you happiness"; "I wish you health"; "I wish you joy"; "I wish you ease of living"; and "I wish you freedom in all things" are relevant to all beings. To get to the fullness of the Mettā, one learns to do this practice in stages. The stages are 1) Yourself 2) a good friend 3) a 'neutral' person 4) A difficult person 5) All four and 6) then gradually the entire universe. The recommended practice time for stage one is one year of wishing your self loving kindness. This is a very difficult stage for us in the West since we do not choose to treat ourselves well. We find it easier to be kind to others. The practice of being this open hearted, however, creates such wonderful side effects: 1) it eases stress, 2) it calms the mind and 3) using it when you feel sleeplessness promotes a wonderful quality of sleep without bad dreams. Loving kindness lets you move beyond feeling happiness that is selfish because of something that happens to self, to a feeling true happiness at the happiness that others feel. It takes you to that place of being the Creator in the "I am that I am".

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