

Devin Berry

*Metta and Karuna: Two Heart Practices to Cultivate in Meditation and Daily Life*

Week Four: “Love in Action”

December 24, 2022



Welcome back, everyone. This is our final session together. For this session, I'll offer some brief reflections on love in action, the interplay of metta and karuna, of lovingkindness and compassion.

What many of us probably experience globally should serve as a proof that you can't simply legislate the heart. Each of us bears a responsibility to bring the fullness of our practice and the fullness of our hearts to bear and to act accordingly from a place of embodiment.

Lovingkindness, or goodwill, and compassion naturally arise from our meditation practice, from the continuity of mindfulness. As the heart is moved, fierce compassion is cultivated, and we are moved to actively engage.

Feeling compassion is not the end of the path. The next step is love in action. The disarming power of metta and karuna is this onward-leading interplay of appropriate responses. This great medicine of the heart and awareness has the capacity and the power to nurture your inner life, creating belonging like nothing else, revealing more of our humanity, more of our kindness. And as we deepen into the non-self nature of interbeing, leading to the sure heart's release, it's that inner and outer transformation grounded in the power of our dharma practice and awareness that can lead to engagement. It's ultimately knowing that love liberates. Maybe with this type of engagement with the world, we can effect collective change.

With our practice, firmly grounded in the noble eightfold path and embodying metta and karuna, there are many ways to express love in action on a day-to-day basis: reaching out to friends and family to support them, seeking support, and voting. It's beginning the day with the intention of noticing our projections we have of others. It's becoming familiar with our habits and patterns and conditioning so that we can uproot them. It's serving the community in a variety of ways,

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whether that’s direct frontline action, making calls, writing letters, or writing checks. It’s starting where you are with what you have.

One of my favorite things from my childhood was to hear my grandfather, who was a deacon at a church. He would give what was called the report on the sick and the shut-in, as they called it at that time. He would start off like this: “Our brothers and sisters are shut in but will not be shut out of our hearts.” This church program that he led was called The Good Samaritan, and the good Samaritans were those folks who served those who were sick, who were in need, without resources, food, money, who could no longer come to church because of old age or because they were living in a senior home. Some were grieving and mourning, others incarcerated.

There was this team from the community attending directly to these folks, bringing food, cleaning houses, maintaining yards and property, praying for them, singing to them, talking with them, so that they always remained a part of the community and were resourced and connected. Their names would be read, and all the hands in the church would be connected, touching in this symbolic radiating of goodwill and kindness, allowing themselves to be touched by the misfortune and the suffering of others. My grandfather always said that his role with the ministry was to know them and to embrace them heart to heart.

Years after my grandfather died, I received a few of his notes, and this is something that I found that he wrote: “One day, I will surely die, and I’ll die having known a good life and having tended to my heart, yet I could still love more. And I would especially love others more. And I would let this love express itself as a concern for my neighbors, my friends, and everybody that I come in touch with over the phone and then my letters to the prisoners. I would let this love permeate me, overcome me, overwhelm me, and then direct me as we attend to the community.” That’s love in action.

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Again, there are many ways to express love in action, and of course, they begin with mindfulness. They begin with awareness. They begin with being able to touch the suffering of ourselves and touch the suffering of others. They begin with the heartfelt wish: May all beings including ourselves, be happy, and may all beings including ourselves be free from suffering.

I'd like to thank you for tuning in these past four weeks. It's been nourishing to practice with you, to say the least. I hope this has all been of some benefit to you. May you be happy and peaceful. May you be safe and protected. May you live with ease and well-being. And may all beings awaken and be free.