

## **"Metta in Daily Life"**

**A Dhamma talk from Gainesville, FL February 2003**

*by Ven. Bhante Vimalaramsi*

This is the last night of the retreat, and I thought I would talk about how you carry your meditation with you when you start doing your daily activities. In a lot of respects this has been a lot looser retreat than you're used to, and I don't insist that it be a real overly strict retreat because you need also to know how to carry your meditation with you when you're doing other things, not only sitting and doing the walking meditation. What we need to learn how to do is carry that open heart with us with all the different activities we do during the day. Open up and... well, let's put it this way. When you're doing your sitting practice, you send Loving-Kindness to yourself and you send Loving-Kindness to your spiritual friend, and that's all. But with your daily activities, the other times, you can send Loving-Kindness to anybody. You can send it to individual people, you can send it to groups of people, you can send it to all beings, it's up to you.

But the thing that you want to try to do is start making keys for yourself. A key like: when you're brushing your teeth, that that's your time to send Loving-Kindness. When you're walking from your house to your car, try to use that as a key, for that's the time to open up your heart and send Loving-Kindness. Now you're going to forget sometimes, just like you do here, and that's OK. There's no problem with that. But when you see your mind is wandering, then you want to begin again. And that should be the name of this practice: "Do It Again", or "Play It Again", is that the...? [laughter] When you're walking from your car to wherever you have to go, what are you doing with your mind? Your mind is just kind of ho-humming around, getting caught in all kinds of unwholesome mental states, or it's just kind of flying around thinking about this or that. So you use that, getting out of your car, or getting into your car, as your key to practice your Loving-Kindness. Open up your heart and, and if there's someone that you know that is suffering, send them some kind

thoughts. Put them in your heart, radiate that Loving-Kindness to them.

The more times you focus on having an open heart, the more easily the practice progresses. And this is because, when you have an open heart, and you're radiating that Loving-Kindness, you'll notice it very quickly when it closes, when you get caught by thoughts and feelings and all kinds of whatever the circus is that's running in town at that day. So gently let go of those thoughts, let go of those feelings, relax. Wish somebody happiness.

When I was in Malaysia, I used to tell people to keep a little diary: how long were they able to practice Loving-Kindness during the day. And a lady came to me and she said, "You know, I wrote down every time I practiced Loving-Kindness. Sometimes it was only fifteen seconds and sometimes it was a little bit longer, sometimes it was less. And I only practiced Loving-Kindness for eight minutes during the day, that's all I could remember." And she thought she was being a failure. And I said, "Gee, that's great! That's just not regular good, that's real good! That's good practice. And, as you become familiar with doing it, it will become easier."

Now when you have your Loving-Kindness with you during the day, and then you go and sit and do your Loving-Kindness practice in the evening or in the morning, whenever you happen to do it -- I recommend the morning -- your sitting is easier, because you've been mindful during the day. You've seen that your mind has been, wandering around doing this and that, getting caught by this thought and that thought, this feeling and that feeling, and, you start working with it right then. Letting it go, relax, come back to that open heart and giving that love away.

One of the keys that I use, is, every time I see a little baby, makes me smile. So I send Loving-Kindness to that baby. It was funny, I went into a restaurant with some people, and as I was walking out there was a little, oh, must have been two or three year old baby, sitting in a high chair, and he started looking at me. And I started smiling, just because he looked so great. I mean he was just, really,

really soft-faced, and he started smiling back. And then he started bobbing his head up and down. He knew what I was doing. [laughter] And by the time I'd reached the door I started chuckling. Now this was right after the Twin Towers thing, and I walked out the door laughing, and some people were walking right by the door and they heard me laughing, and they had a look of shock on their face. And then they started smiling. So that was a real successful trip. How do you affect the world around you?

So you use as many different keys as you can remember, to, let go of whatever you're thinking about -- it's not that important anyway -- relax, come back to your heart-space and feel that open up, and then send that Loving-Kindness. You're standing in line at the grocery; what are you doing with your mind? "Awh, this lady's got a lot of stuff, it's going to take a long time, aww man." And you know, everybody else in line is doing the same thing. "I can't wait to get out of here, I've got other things to do, I don't want to be here." So you can have compassion for those people.

Now, what's the definition of compassion? Compassion is seeing another person's pain, allowing them to have that pain and loving them anyway. When I would go into the hospitals, when I was doing that quite a bit, I'd walk into somebody's room, smiling. And, ok, they have a lot of pain, they're really in serious trouble, they're getting close to death. Ok. That's a sad situation. That's right. And I can love them anyway. Now it was real amazing because, people would tell me that when I walked in the room, it felt like some fresh air came into the room. Now, if you know somebody that's depressed and you walk into the room where they are, how does that feel? Not very nice. You have a choice at that time: you can either take their depression and become depressed right along with them, or you can allow them the space to have those kind of feelings, and love them. They can go through whatever they want to, that's their karma; they want to get caught by these things, that's fine. But, ultimately, I'm responsible for me. So what I wind up doing is just radiating Loving-Kindness and wishing, quite often it's all beings. And after a little while the energy in the room starts to change.

Now, when you have strong Loving-Kindness, when you're able to focus on it very deeply, there can be some heat arising in your body. And this heat is a healing energy. And when you focus very strongly with Loving-Kindness, when you practice enough, your mind becomes very calm. And because your mind becomes calm, their mind becomes calm. And when their mind becomes calm, then they start letting go and that depression starts to raise up a little bit. It starts to dissipate a little bit in them. So you can't take another person's pain away, no matter how hard you try or how much you indulge in their pain; you only make yourself suffer. The more you practice focusing on Loving-Kindness and having an open heart, that's where the healing is. The more you can radiate that feeling of happiness and love, the more you can smile -- and laugh once in while, the more you effect the world around you in a positive way by your example.

Now a man came to me, while I was in Malaysia, he was a pilot, he was flying these 747s all over the world. And he developed cancer, and he was suffering from that, but he didn't tell me about that when he first came. He just wanted to learn about the meditation, so I taught him. And then he had to go into the hospital. And, his wife asked if I could go visit him. So, 'Sure, no problem.' So I went and he was suffering quite a bit; the cancer had gotten into his bones. It's very painful. And he saw me coming and I was with... when I did that I generally went with somebody else because they had to drive me. So they would come into the hospital along with me. And he saw me coming down the hall, and I was kind of giggling and laughing and generally radiating Loving-Kindness to everybody in the hospital. And he said when he saw me - I hadn't even gone up and talked to him - the pain started to become less. And I went up and I started talking with him, I said: "What are you in here for? Why are you here?" He said: "I have cancer, and it looks like this cancer is going to kill me." And I said: "Ok. What are you doing with your mind? When the pain arises, what are you doing with your mind? Are you able to soften into that pain? Are you able to relax? Are you able to smile into" "No." "Ok. Can you allow the pain to be there without resisting it?" "Real difficult because it's so intense." So I gave him

the instructions again: "When the sensation arises, it's just a sensation. It's intense sensation. Ok. It's all right."

Now, I've told this before: I have a silver tooth here. When I was in Burma, a dentist decided he was going to do me a big favor when he came to the monastery and cleaned my teeth and he broke it. And then he said, Well, now we're going to have to do a root canal and cap it.' And I said, 'Fine, we can do that.' But in Burma, they don't clean their utensils very well. And he wanted to give me a shot of novocain, and I said, 'You're not going to give me any shots. You just go ahead and start drilling on that tooth; I'll take care of the rest.' So I don't know if anybody's seen these drills that they use for root canal, but they're about an inch and a half long, and that's how far they go in. Really go in deeply. Now he started drilling and I didn't have any painkiller, so what I started noticing is: I was holding on the arms of the chair real tight, and the pain was real intense. And I noticed that I was holding on so tight, and I relaxed. And then I noticed that I had tension in the small of my back, and I relaxed. And then I noticed my mind not liking this sensation, and I let it go and I relaxed. And then it hit another place, and all of a sudden I was tight again. So I was spending the whole time relaxing into the sensation. It was real. It was big. And it was ok. It went from being a pain to just being a sensation. So I understand pain. I understand physical pain very nicely. And I also know that this is the way, that you can allow. that kind of pain. You don't need to jump for pain-killers, you don't need to run away from it. You need to allow the pain to be there. Now, after a while I got pretty good at recognizing, because this tension was always coming up in the same place, and then I had enough time to send Loving-Kindness to the person that was causing me the pain. And I think he slowed down then, it seemed like he liked that, so he wasn't going as quickly as he could. But after about fifteen minutes, or twenty minutes, something like that, he stopped. He said, 'OK, we're done.' He was doing other things but we're done with the drilling. And I kept on opening and relaxing. My mind became very clear in the present moment, very alert. I was ready for whatever else there was. It was no problem at all, whatever arose, I could see it, I could allow it, I could relax, let it go, and come back to radiating Loving-Kindness. After a period of time, when he got done I

started walking out of the dentist's office and I had such joy and such clarity of mind, it was just unbelievable. And I went back to the monastery and everybody was kind of looking at me and they were saying, 'Did it hurt?' 'Well, there was some pain, but it was no big deal.' 'But you didn't have any pain-killer! I couldn't do that.' We can do that with any kind of physical sensation and we can do that with any kind of emotional upset. It takes, being aware of how you tighten around these things. And being aware means you have to start to look for. Look at the different places in your body. and relax into them. Look at your mind, how it tightens around these things, and relax. Let it be there. It's only a bunch of thoughts; it's only feelings. No big deal. They're not even mine. They're just thoughts and feelings.

Now what happens when, you, walk into work, or you go in to see someone and they have anger? And they start giving you that anger? They start scolding you for one reason or another. At that moment you have a decision. If your mind is very clear, if your mind is very alert in the present moment, you can see that that's their anger, and you can see that other person suffering. And you can allow them to have their suffering without taking it personally as your own. Or, you can take their anger and make it your anger and then throw it back at them. That's your choice. But if you do that, if you take that anger and make it yours and then throw it back and then you have a fight, what do you think about when they walk away? What I said, what he said, and what I should have said. And it's his mistake. He's wrong. I'm right. And this plays like it's on a tape deck, it plays over and over again. And each time there's this tension and tightness, and this is what attachment is. This is what suffering is. But when you're alert enough, that you can see another person has pain, and you can allow them the space to have their pain, and you start sending that love to them, you're being compassionate at that time. Now one of two things happens when you do that. Either that person will become kind of fed up and walk away grumbling to themselves, or they'll calm down. And then you can find out what the real problem is, because it's not what they're yelling about. And when you walk away from that person, or he walks away from you, your mind is bright. Your mind is alert. Your mind is in the present moment. You're ready for

whatever else there is. You don't have a lot of thoughts cluttering your mind about that no-good so-and-so and what they said and what I said. You don't have that. You're very alert. Now, if you, took their anger and made it your own and threw it back at them and then they walk away, and you stomp off and you get in the car and you start driving, are you driving really? Not really. You're thinking about what they said and what I said and, accident. You run into something, because you're not paying attention. Or someone else runs into you because you're not paying attention, because of that attachment to those thoughts and those feelings, and the lack of mindfulness of being aware that this is what's happening.

It's always easiest to let go immediately. Then you don't have much attachment at all. But if you take that emotion and you start owning that, then it's very difficult to let go of. And this is the time when people will come to me and they'll say, 'Well, this happened or that happened and I tried to let it go, but it wouldn't go away!' Yeah, that's right. It's gonna stay around for a while until you let go of the attachment to it and relax. But when you finally let go of that, then there's joy. Then there's more clarity of mind. Then you pop right into the present moment and you're alert for whatever else there is. So the more times and the more situations that we're in with our daily activities that we can put Loving-Kindness into whatever we're doing, and love what we're doing and love everything that we're working with, the more clear our mind becomes. Everything becomes easier.

If you have a job you don't particularly like to do and you start dwelling on how much you don't like to do it, then your mind becomes very distracted with these thoughts, and you start getting involved in how much you don't like it, and the thoughts get bigger and you're not paying attention to what you're doing, so you don't do it very well. And you become incredibly inefficient. Then when you can see what you're doing and you go, 'Oh, look at what I'm doing to myself.' And you start letting it go and you start putting love into what you're doing, all of a sudden everything starts to work just right, just like you wanted it to in the first place. The more you

indulge in dissatisfaction and dislike, the more pain you cause yourself and the harder it is to do everything.

Now getting back to my friend at the hospital, the airplane pilot, I started regularly going to see him, three or four times a week. And every time we would sit, he was lying down, but we would practice our meditation together. And I was using him as my spiritual friend. He was really a nice person: very intelligent, very compassionate. He'd spent a lot of the money that he made being a pilot helping other people. He was really inspiring. And as he started doing that, he started using less and less drugs for the pain. But the pain was getting more intense. And the doctors couldn't believe it, and they kept on coming around and saying, 'Are you sure you don't want to take this?' And he would tell them, 'If I take this drug, then it clouds my mind. And when I have a clouded mind, it's real difficult to be aware. So I prefer not to do that to myself.' After about four or five weeks, one day I walked into his room and he was really serious. And his family was there and he said, 'I want everybody to leave, I have to talk to Reverend.' So everybody left; I said, 'What's happening?' And he said, 'The doctor just told me that it's time for me to write out my will.' He said, in a real soft little voice, he said, 'I'm terminal.' And I started to laugh. I said, 'So am I! Everybody is! And it's OK to be terminal.' And then he started to see how funny his mind was, how it grabbed onto this and really didn't like this news. And when he laughed, then he started seeing, 'Oh, it's really not that big a deal anyway.' We're going to live for a period of time, and we're going to check out: every one of us. And it's OK. It has to be OK because that's the way it is. So don't resist it. The features on his face changed so drastically, I mean, he was really sad when I walked into the room, and really serious. And by the time I left, his family was back in the room and they were giggling and laughing about past things that had happened. Now what happened with him? He got told some real serious news: you are going to die and it's not going to be very long from now. He got caught by fear, he got caught by dissatisfaction, he got caught by desires to do other things and to spend more time with his family, and he got caught by all of these thoughts and all of these feelings and they were clouding his perception. But when he told me about it and I laughed, and I told

him it was OK, then he started seeing that these thoughts and these feelings are really liars. They're not telling you the truth. What's the truth? What's happening right now? Can you smile into it? Can you laugh with it? Can you laugh at how absurd all of these thoughts are? And how much you hold onto these things? And how much pain you cause yourself. When you laugh, when you smile into this, your perspective changes. And it goes from, 'I'm sad, I'm angry, I'm upset,' to 'Oh, it's only the sadness, it's only this anger, it's only this being upset. No big deal.'

The more we can practice with our daily activities, practice having that open heart, the more aware we are when our heart closes. And this is one of the reasons why the Buddha said that this meditation, your progress is faster with this meditation than with any other kind of meditation, because it's a drastic difference. You're walking around, you feel happy, and all of a sudden, CLANK! 'Ooh, that hurt.' So you work with letting it go, and the fastest way is by laughing. 'But I don't feel like laughing. This is too serious.' When your mind becomes serious, it turns little bumps in the road into Mt. Everest. It's insurmountable. Can't even see the top. And then when you laugh and you look at that, you say, 'Oh, it's only that!' This whole retreat I've been talking over and over about the necessity of smiling and the necessity of laughing. When you smile, when you laugh, how does your body feel? Light. Your mind feels more alert. 'Ah, but I've gotta think seriously about this, this is really bad.' No it's not. It's only your perspective that pulls us down into the mud. And we can stay there and we can wrestle in the mud if we want to, or not. Buddhism is the ultimate in self-responsibility. There's no one and there's no thing out there that causes your pain. It's your perspective, your view of what's happening. And the more you have a light view, a light perspective, the easier life becomes. Your sense of humor starts to change. You start laughing a little bit more as you practice. And when you laugh a little bit more, your sense of humor becomes better, and you can make other people happy right along with it, just laughing at the absurdity of some of these things. It's not laughing at things, it's laughing with them. I mean, seeing that little boy bob his head up and down was not necessarily funny, but to me, I had a vision of those dogs you put on your car dashboard and the

head's bouncing up and down with every little bump. That's the vision I had and it was funny!

Now when this pilot, I had to leave, I was going to do some teaching in Thailand. And I had already been set up and there was no way I could stay with the pilot any longer. So I told him I was going to leave and I told him that if he had any business that needed to be finished that now was the time to do it. And that business is, if he had any hard feelings, or he said things or did things and it hurt other people, now was the time to acknowledge that you did that and ask for forgiveness or forgive someone else. And he did that. I was gone for two weeks and I came back. The day I came back, I was at the airport when he died. Now the last two weeks of his life was pretty terrible. His body had just started rotting off, and all of the flesh, he was down to skin and bone. And I talked with his wife and his wife said that they had spent time forgiving each other for their lifetimes of making each other angry, one reason or another, and that when he died, he rolled over on his side, he saw an image of the Buddha that I'd given him, and he smiled, and at that moment he died. Can't get any better than that. That's complete loving acceptance of the present moment. And his wife was completely shocked at the change that went over him. His whole personality changed while he was in the hospital, and he became very kind. And while he was radiating Loving-Kindness, the nurses in the hospital, when they had their break, they would come in and sit in his room, because they felt comfortable. Even in that condition he was affecting the world around him in a positive way. That's what Loving-Kindness is all about. Keeping your heart open as much as you can during the day improves your mindfulness immeasurably. And you'll find yourself kind of giggling and laughing about nothing in particular. Your sense of humor is your sign that you're progressing along the spiritual path. 'Oh, but being enlightened is serious stuff.' Ok. Be seriously happy. Open up into the present moment. When you have joy in your mind, your mind is very agile. Your mind is very alert, and you can see your heart just begin to start closing and you can recognize that and let it go and start relaxing again.

Now, the more I talk about how do these hindrances arise, the reason I wanted you to pay so close attention to how they arise is because when you get out there, you'll be more familiar with them. And the more you become familiar with them, the faster you can recognize them, and the faster you can let them go. This is pretty easy practice, really. I mean, you don't have to do much, just be happy. And it's simple. Smile. Laugh. Radiate those good feelings. Can't get any simpler than that. The problem is, we like to be real complicated. "Well, I can't do that now, because, this is there and that is there, and this is a problem and that's a problem" That's just more nonsense thinking. That's what one of my teachers would call 'rubbish thoughts.'

I used to try a lot of different things as keys for practicing the Loving-Kindness, and one of the keys that I started using for a while, and it's not an easy one, it's a difficult thing to do, was every time I was sitting down and I got up and I started walking, then that was my key to start practicing Loving-Kindness. Every time I stopped and I was standing still, when I started again, that was my key to practice Loving-Kindness. Now you're not going to be able to do that. It's a difficult practice because you do that so many times during the day. You make that your practice of meditation if you have the time to do it.

Another aspect of Loving-Kindness is that it is very healing for other people. If, like Casey was talking about, these little cards, when you start sending Loving-Kindness to other people, there is healing that occurs. The body still might die, but mind is much more open, much more relaxed, much more accepting. One of my friends is, his name is Stephen Levine, and he's got dying out of the closet, so to speak. And he started making many more people aware of the dying process and how you have to start staying open into the present moment as much as you can and learning how to lovingly accept everything. He wrote a book and I recommend it highly for everyone. It's called, 'Healing Into Death.' We practice dying every time we let go of something, and when you practice dying, you live fully. Because then there's no tomorrow, there's no yesterday, there's only right now.

Your mind will start to go deeper into your meditation when you keep practicing your daily Loving-Kindness.

One of the things I think I told you, that I took a mirror and I wrote 'Smile' on it. While I was a businessman, I had my own construction company, I had twenty-five people working for me, all carpenters and plumbers, and all these kind of thing. But I had been at a meditation center for two years, at a monastery, I was taking care of monks, and I got time to leave and I started my own business. And when I started the business I started by borrowing three hundred dollars to get it going. And by my telephone, I put this mirror that said, 'Smile.' And I made that part of my Loving-Kindness practice, that every time I got on the telephone, I don't care if it was a wrong number, I was gonna smile and be pleasant to that person. And some of the wrong numbers, we had great conversations! It was amazing. But I started building houses for presidents of banks and people that owned very expensive property in San Francisco, they owned a lot of buildings and those kind of things. And they would come and they would talk to me just a little bit. First I would talk to them on the phone; somebody would tell me, 'Why don't you give them a call? They're thinking about having a house built. They don't have anybody to do it yet.' So I would call them up, and I would look at my mouth, and when I wasn't smiling, I started smiling more and opening up my heart. And then we would set up a meeting. And I would go see them, sometimes it would be in the bank or their office or sometimes it would be at their house, wherever they were living, it didn't matter. Before every meeting, I would stand in front of a mirror and smile for five minutes. And I know I did it for five minutes because I had a watch and I timed it. And five minutes worth of smiling is a long time. But my heart would open up, and while I was standing in front of the mirror smiling I was radiating Loving-Kindness to myself; I was radiating Loving-Kindness to the persons that I was going to talk to, and I was radiating Loving-Kindness into the whole situation. Then I would go in and I would talk with them, and our meetings went great. They were happy, I was happy, we did our business very quickly, and then we went our separate ways. Now there were some times when I was in the process of building their houses that I had to go and talk to them about changes that they

wanted made, whatever. And I would be pushed for time, because they're very busy people and you have to be there exactly on time or they don't like that, and sometimes I'd get caught in traffic or whatever. And I didn't have the opportunity to stand in front of the mirror for five minutes and smile. And those were the meetings that were difficult. I still would radiate a little bit of Loving-Kindness but I hadn't prepared my mind before I went in. So I started to see more and more the importance of having an open heart.

Now I know there's a lot of people that have this idea that if you're really loving and if you're really kind, people will take advantage of you. And it isn't true. When you start practicing Loving-Kindness you don't leave your brain at the door. If someone starts to take advantage of you, you talk to them in a nice way and politely refuse whatever they're trying to do. 'No, that's not such a good idea.'

Loving-Kindness is a protection. And there's a book called 'The Book of Protections,' it's written by Piyadassi Thera. He and I were real close friends for a period of time. He came to this monastery where I was taking care of another monk and he stayed there for three months. Any time he wanted to go someplace, I would take him. He was great fun to be around, we were always giggling and laughing about something. One day I had been real busy because I was working on my own at the time, and he wanted to go out and I didn't have a chance to fill up the gas tank. So we were driving to where he wanted to go and we were on the freeway and all of the sudden the car just went pfft. No more gas. So I put it in neutral and I coasted up an on-ramp. It happened to be during rush hour. And it went about halfway up and that's as far as it would go. So I stopped and opened up the hood, I said, 'I've gotta go get some gas, I'll be back in a little while.' Fortunately a gas station was not very far away. So I got out and I ran and I went to get the gas, and the gas can that I had had a hole in it. So I said, 'I'll buy a can from you, I just need to get the gas,' and he said, 'We don't have one.' So I had to run to an auto store to get the gas can, come back and get the gas, and finally I came back and I got the car running again, and I got in the car, and this monk was sitting there and he said, 'You know, while you were gone there was a lot of people who were honking their horns,

and as they went by they said some very memorable things!' [laughter] But even though people were cursing and they were yelling at him, he didn't take any of that personally. He made a conscious decision at that time, 'This is what's happening right now, so it's all right.' So we had a good laugh about it, and I was greatly relieved when I got the tank filled up again. And it never happened again, thank God for little things.

You can put Loving-Kindness into any situation. Now I've had a lot of students that were going to college. Now, in Malaysia when you go to college, you have one test a year. You pass or you don't pass on that test. And they really got stressed out; these were Chinese. Chinese are very ambitious, and they have a lot of pressure on them from their parents to do well, in school. So it would be a month, a month and a half before the final exam, they would come to me and say, 'We need a retreat real bad.' So I would spend as long as they could afford [time wise], sometimes it was five days, sometimes it was seven days, sometimes it was ten, and what I was teaching them was how to recognize anxiety and recognize restlessness and to let it go, because if they didn't do the retreat they would try to study and the worry and the fear of failing would distract their mind. So their mind was always running around and they weren't very efficient at the studying. So I taught them very easily how to let go of the restlessness, how to see it, how to recognize when your mind is wandering away. Let it go and relax, radiate that feeling of love, and come back to studying. When they started taking the test, I told them that the night before the test you don't study anymore. If you don't know it by now, the last few hours is not going to help you, it's going to hurt anyway. So what I told them next was you have to get a good night's sleep, and you have to get up and you sit in the morning right before the test, and then while you're taking the test, if you start feeling anxiety because you don't know the answer then let that question go and go to the next question. And then come back. If you absolutely don't know the answer then you focus on Loving-Kindness: 'Loving-Kindness is guiding me to say exactly the right thing, or write exactly the right thing right now.' And you radiate Loving-Kindness and you get into your intuitive mind. And they were amazed when they got done that they were actually doing quite well

on their tests. When you're trying to remember something and it doesn't come very easily, then let go and focus on your Loving-Kindness. 'Loving-Kindness is helping me to remember right now.' And then you open up your heart. When you open up your heart, you allow the space for that quiet, intuitive mind to come up with the answers. All you have to do is listen. After they'd taken the test they'd come up to me and they'd say, 'You know, this stuff really works!' And I said [laughter], 'That's why I've been spending all this time and energy helping you, because I know it works!'

So before any major meetings, before meeting anyone, radiate some Loving-Kindness. Make that one of your keys. If you do a repetitious job, now I sometimes will make Buddha images. I'll draw it on a piece of cardboard and then I fill the whole thing in with very thin thread and glue it in. Takes a long time to do that, but that's when I'm practicing Loving-Kindness. Another thing that I'll do is, on the board before I even begin, before I draw the Buddha image and begin filling it in, I'll write very small letters, 'May all beings be happy, may all beings be happy, may all beings be happy, may all beings be happy,' hundreds of thousands of times. Now I decided to that while I was in Thailand when I had some extra time, and I'd just got through writing down, finishing out the whole thing, and I was feeling really happy, and a monk came to me and he said he wanted me to go with him to the doctor, because he was kind of afraid. So I went with him, and my heart was really open, and the way they have their doctors' offices is a little bit different than here, they're kind of open shops, and anybody can look in and come in and sit down if they want, whatever. And I wasn't even thinking of Loving-Kindness but my heart was open and it was a very nice feeling. And a little boy, five or six years old came up and he sat on my lap. And he started smiling and I smiled back at him, and he started speaking in Thai and I smiled back at him, because I don't know Thai. And the monk that I was with was kind of caught in his fear and his anxiety of going to the doctor and he didn't really know what was going to be happening. He decided he wanted to play with the little boy and he picked him up off my lap and put him on his lap, and the little boy went crazy. Started hitting him, wanted to get off, came back and sat on my lap. Any kind of activities that you do, if you can put your love

into it, it pays big dividends. And your meditation, your quiet meditation while you're sitting, your mind becomes very much at ease very quickly. And the joy arises very quickly, or the feeling of comfort, the happiness. When you focus on Loving-Kindness more with your daily activities, you start having a more balanced viewpoint, a more balanced perspective of what's happening in the present moment.

So this is your last evening for meditation. Tomorrow it's going to be a little bit busy, we'll still sit some together but not so much; we have other things we have to do to clean up and get ready to go, that sort of thing. It would be real good if you put in a little of the extra effort to sit beyond ten o'clock. 'Oh, but I need my sleep.' This is the last night. One of the things I learned when I was in Burma meditating, and I cut down the sleep from four hours to two hours a night, was that it was difficult, but I was determined to do it. And generally I was leaving the meditation hall about ten o'clock so that I could walk back, it was quite a long walk and I was walking very slowly back to my room so that I could go to bed at eleven o'clock. So the first night I decided that I was going to sit longer, and I was overcome very strongly by the sloth and torpor. So I got up and there was nobody else in the meditation hall, which was nice so I could walk in the meditation hall, so I started walking and picking up my energy a little bit, then I went back and sat, and went back, sleepiness again. So I kept my eyes open. And it was torture for the first two hours the first night. But still I was determined. The teacher told me I was sleeping too much when I took four hours of sleep. I was determined to take two. Getting up the next morning was somewhat difficult, and I had the sloth and torpor. And then when I went in for my interview with him, he said, 'How are you doing?' and I said, 'I'm a little bit sleepy right now.' And he read the riot act. 'You're not being mindful, you're indulging! It's only a feeling!' From that I learned quite a bit. And sleepiness can be overcome with strong mindfulness. It's not easy, but it can be done. Now there are some practices that monks do that are a little bit on the austere side. There's thirteen different austerities that the Buddha allowed the monks to do without being over-austere. One of the practices is: only taking three postures. You can sit. You can walk. You can stand. You don't lie down. This is

somewhat difficult. There's three different sections of not lying down. You can sit in the middle of the floor. Or you can lean against the wall. Or you can sit in a chair that has arms in it. But you never lie down, ever. What's the advantage of this kind of meditation? You don't sleep so soundly, so you wind up, it takes a lot of energy to do this practice. And I don't recommend it, because it is a difficult practice. But when you do it for a few months you become used to it, and then you start taking shorter and shorter periods of sleep, and you wind up with so much energy that the sloth and torpor doesn't come. It just doesn't arise because it takes so much energy just to have three postures, never to lie down. And that's one of the austerities that the Buddha said, if you want to practice that, you can do that. And every monk, just about every monk, at some point tries this. And you try for six month or eight months and you get the idea of what it's like, and if you want to, you can continue. One of my teachers was Tongpulu Sayadaw. He was an old monk when I met him; he was late eighties. He became a monk when he was twenty years old. He hadn't lied down for, sixty-eight years? Sixty-nine years? He died when he was ninety-six, so he didn't lay down for seventy-six years. He sat in a chair. And he was one of the more powerful people I've ever been around. His meditation was brilliant. One day I decided that, I had a crystal and I had a friend that I wanted to give it to but I wanted some real strong Loving-Kindness in it, so I said, 'Bhante, can you hold this and radiate some Loving-Kindness for me?' So he said, 'Yeah, that's OK.' And he was radiating Loving-Kindness and it was so strong, and the heat coming off of his body was so intense that I wound up sweating like I'd been out running for miles. And then when he put that crystal back in my hand, it had a lot of heat in it. And I gave it to my friend who at the time was sick, and he had to go in and have an operation, and he wanted to have a calm mind and relaxed mind so that he didn't have so much anxiety about what was going to happen in the operation and that sort of thing. So I gave him the crystal. And he told me that when he held that crystal, that he had such strong feelings of Loving-Kindness, his heart just opened up that there was no fear that arose in his mind, there was no anxiety, there was no disturbance. His mind just became calm. And I think he still has that crystal; I would imagine he does.

Now at the start of the retreat I told you that I thought it would be a good idea if you hold a bottle of water and practice your Loving-Kindness while you're holding the water. When you start to feel a little bit sick, you start to have an upset mind in one way or the other, take some sips of that water. I recommend that you hold it every time you sit. And then if you have a friend that's going to have some kind of major problem, physical or they're going through a real rough time, give them some of that water. There was a monk in Burma, he was another real powerful monk, that when he would chant the Loving-Kindness Sutta, somebody would put a bowl of water in front of him; he wouldn't touch it, he would just chant the Loving-Kindness Sutta, and the water started bubbling like it was on the fire. And then people would take that water and then they would wash their face with it, they would drink some of it, they did all kinds of things with it. He became real famous for that. His Loving-Kindness was amazingly strong. He told me the story of, he was walking with a lot of people out in the forest and he walked under a tree where there was a beehive, and the beehive fell, right at his feet. Everybody that was with him got stung. He didn't get stung at all, because he started radiating Loving-Kindness; he had compassion for those bees.

So the more we can focus on Loving-Kindness and give that Loving-Kindness away, the more we start affecting everyone else around us, and the more balanced our own mind becomes. The objective of this meditation is to be able to carry your Loving-Kindness with you as closely as you carry your skin. All the time. Just walk around with an open heart, wishing other people well, watching your own mind, letting go of things that close your heart.

The Buddha talked about Loving-Kindness many, many times, many suttas. He talked about mindfulness of breathing in eight or nine suttas. What do you think he taught most? It's real fashionable right now in this country to do the breathing meditation. And it's a good meditation, I'm not saying that it's not. But your progress in your meditation, your spiritual progress is much faster when you practice this meditation. You become very sensitive to when your heart closes

down, so you can let go of these things. It takes some practice, that's true. But it's worth it. As you go and you see your relatives and you radiate Loving-Kindness to them, it feels like there's something else in the room. There's a softness that you hadn't been able to notice before. And you'll notice that they start smiling more too, and they kinda like that.

**May all beings be happy.**

*Bhante Vimalaramsi*

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