

When Metta Meditation Is Difficult

As we seek to do the metta meditation practice, we may have difficulty in feeling or radiating loving-kindness toward one of the following:

- Oneself
- A Benefactor
- A Friend
- A Neutral Person
- A Difficult Person
- The Wider Community
- All Sentient Beings

We may simply feel unable to include an individual in our mettā practice.

A solution to this is to start with those we already feel kindly disposed toward, and then to slowly and gradually extend the same kindness to the others.

If this doesn't work, an interim solution is to approach a particular person through *another quality*. Possibilities include (1) compassion, (2) gratitude (for the good seen), or (3) respect. We can remind ourselves that we are seeking to unconditionally care about the well-being of all beings.

Another possibility is to work with *forgiveness* for a few days, and then to return to the metta practice. We all fail; we also all have good qualities. The strengths can be acknowledged; the faults and errors can be forgiven.

Here are some words that may be used or adapted in a forgiveness practice:

- I am aware of my wish to foster happiness and reduce suffering for myself and for others.
- I am aware, too, of the imperfections that may hinder this wish.
- Where my actions have caused suffering, may I be forgiven.
- Where my actions conflict with those others would choose, may they understand.
- I am grateful that the next in-breath marks a new beginning.

Source: Personal notes based on an online meditation course entitled *Vipassana Fellowship Meditation Course*, which provides practical instruction in mindfulness meditation as found in the tranquillity (*samatha*) and insight (*vipassana*) traditions of early Buddhism (Theravada tradition). The course, hosted since 1997, is led by Andrew Quernmore, a meditation teacher for nearly 20 years and with a personal meditation practice of more than 30 years. Further details may be found at <http://www.vipassana.com/course/>