

RECONCILING FROM A DISTANCE

Even if the person with whom you need to reconcile is very far away, you can still do the work of reconciliation now. What is important is to reconcile within your own heart and mind. If reconciliation is done within, that is enough. Because the effect of that reconciliation will be felt everywhere later on. Even if the person you want to reconcile with refuses to respond, or even if she's already dead, reconciliation is still possible. Reconciliation means to work it out than yourself so that peace can be restored. Reconcile with yourself for the sake of the world, for the sake of all living beings. Your peace and serenity are crucial for all of us.

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STARTING A FAMILY

Before having a child, it would be wonderful if people would take a year to look deeply into themselves, to practice loving speech and deep listening, and to learn the other practices that will help them enjoy themselves and their children more. Bringing a new life into the world is a serious matter. Taking a year for introspection and preparation doesn't seem too much. Doctors and therapists spend up to ten years to

get a license. But anyone can become a parent without any training or preparation. Parents can learn how to sow seeds of happiness, peace, and joy in the new child.

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PRACTICE OF METTA

To love is, first of all, to accept ourselves as we actually are. The first practice of love is to know oneself. The Pali word *metta* means “loving kindness.” When we practice Metta Meditation, we see the conditions that have caused us to be the way we are; this makes it easy for us to accept ourselves, including our suffering and our happiness. When we practice Metta Meditation, we touch our deepest aspirations. But the willingness and aspiration to love is not yet love. We have to look deeply, with all our being, in order to understand the object of our meditation. The practice of love meditation is not autosuggestion. We have to look deeply at our body, feelings, perceptions, mental formations, and consciousness. We can observe how much peace, happiness, and lightness we already have. We can notice whether we are anxious about accidents or misfortunes, and how our anger, irritation, fear, anxiety, or worry are still in us. As we become aware of

the feelings in us, self-understanding will deepen. We will see how our fears and lack of peace contribute to our unhappiness, and we will see the value of loving ourselves and cultivating a heart of compassion love will enter our thoughts, words, and actions.

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DIGGING DEEP

Practicing loving kindness meditation is like digging deep into the ground until we reach the purest water. We look deeply into ourselves until insight arises and our love flows to the surface. Joy and happiness radiate from our eyes, and everyone around us benefits from our smile and our presence. If we take good care of ourselves, we can help everyone. We stop being a source of suffering to the world, and we've become a reservoir of joy and freshness. Here and there are people who know how to take good care of themselves, who live joyfully and happily. They are our strongest support. Whatever they do they do for everyone.

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MAKING MISTAKES

Since we're human beings, we make mistakes. We cause others to suffer. We hurt our loved ones, and we feel regret. But without making mistakes, there is no way to learn. If you can learn from your mistakes, then you have already transformed garbage into flowers. Very often, our mistakes come from our unskillfulness, and not because we want to harm one another. I think of our behavior in terms of being more or less skillful rather than in terms of good and bad. If you are skillful, you can avoid making yourself suffer and the other person suffer. If there's something you want to tell the other person, then you have to say it, but do so skillfully, in a way that leads to less rather than more suffering.