

# Love When It Is Hard (1 of 5) Where the Desire To Be Kind Is Enough

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## **SUMMARY KEYWORDS**

challenge, reactive, goodwill, pause, reactivity, inquiry, dependent, urgency, frustration, overriding, preoccupied

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We will continue with the theme of how to practice with the challenges that we have. This week, the topic is meeting challenges with love. What I'd like to offer today, when we are in challenges, is to ask ourselves the question, "Where is the love?" Or, "What is the loving thing to do?" Or: "Where is the kindness? What is the kind thing to do?"

I think the nature of a challenge is often that our focus gets preoccupied and narrow, concerned with what the challenge is. When we are involved with a challenge, sometimes there is not that much room to process or reflect on things. The more intense our involvement with the challenge, the narrower our focus becomes, and the smaller our world becomes, until we are only with the concern.

Of course, some of these challenges are huge and tragic. But still, they take all the air out of the room and all the attention out of the space, so that we end up navigating the small world of the challenge itself. So asking the question, “Where is the love?” or, “What is the kind thing to do here?” begins to open up the space again. Why leave love out? Why leave out the question: “What’s the kind thing to do? What’s kind here in this situation?”

Sometimes, of course, the challenge doesn’t give us time – it is not appropriate to take the time for that. But when a challenge does not have to be addressed immediately, it might be invaluable to take the time to ask: “Where’s the love? What would be the kind thing to do here?”

There might be a lot of protests about kindness and respect, especially when there’s a challenge – such as: “That’s not what’s needed now; that’s not appropriate now; the situation doesn’t call for it; no one deserves it. If someone else is involved, I certainly don’t want to be kind to them. I mean, I’m angry with them and I just want them to suffer.”

But if we take the time to step back into ourselves, we begin to appreciate there are layers of responses that exist within us, and rather than staying at the surface level, we can go deep down. Reactivity is always on the

surface. It might have deep roots inside, but reactivity is always a surface response. One reason to meditate and be mindful is to drop below the reactive mind, and to relax the tensions in the body and the mind, so we begin to have access to something besides reactivity, with the strong authority that reactivity can have over us. Asking the question, “Where is the love? What is the kind thing here?” creates a pause, a questioning, an inquiry that can help us get below the reactive state of mind and look more deeply at what is going on.

It might not be possible to love – “where’s the love? I don’t know. It’s not available,” you might think. What is the kind thing to do here? It might be too hard to answer. But simply asking the question can allow space for other information to come in, then maybe we can have a different approach to the challenge we have to address.

As we ask this question and take a pause for the inquiry, then we can go down through the layers. If the top layer is what we do, below that is a decision about what to do. Below the decision, there is a wish for something. We can wish without deciding to pursue it. With kindness and goodwill, we might not have goodwill to act on. We might not have made the decision that we want to have goodwill. But maybe deep down inside, we can find a place where we feel: “Yes. It would be nice if there was goodwill and friendliness here. It would be

nice to have them in this approach to what is going on here.”

What would that look like? Who are we being kind to? If you're having technology problems with your computer, I don't know if it makes sense to have kindness for your computer. But how about kindness for yourself? What is overriding kindness? What is the sense of urgency or the sense of frustration that gets in the way of the value of love, of kindness, of wishing to have love and kindness for ourselves? Just asking that question begins to change the ecology of it all.

If the challenge is with someone else or people, do you have any desire for their welfare and their happiness somewhere deep down inside? Can you imagine a context where you would have that wish for those people? Or are they beyond the pale: “No way, nothing is possible?” Is it really this way all the time, or is the challenge with them contextual? Is there a different context where you might feel some basic, ordinary, human goodwill and care for them?

Maybe there is the desire to be able to do it, even if you can't do it. The desire to do it is a form of kindness – a form of love. Appreciate the desire to have love and to be kind as a form of kindness. I know it is hard to be kind all the time, it's hard to have love. It is sometimes

hard to wish for others' welfare. But can you at least want to be able to do it?

This is valuable for us. It is medicine for us to be able to come back and find that place of basic goodness and basic care. If we are not connected to that, we become estranged from ourselves. Chances are we are living a little too much in the reactive world, the projected world, and the fantasy world of ideas and concepts and hurts. We do not want to sacrifice or lose touch with this deep place that can't be hurt, that is not transactional, and not dependent on anyone being anything – even on you being anything. Rather, that place is before all that. It is the simplest, rudimentary wish and desire to want to love, to want to be kind, to want to care. Take the time to find that. If you find that, it might be easier to breathe. If you find that, you might find there is a little more space in the challenge. If you find that, the challenge may still be the same, but there is a little bit more space for you to address it, to be with it, to not be battered around by it as much.

Ask: “Where's the love? What's the kind thing to do?” And then back up inside as deep as you can go, until you can find some inkling, some little impulse towards love. Even if it is not love, it is towards love. It is not dependent on any condition in the world being one way or the other. It is just what the heart does.

This week, I would like us to reflect on the topic of love, kindness, and goodwill in times of challenge, and learn to bring them into the picture. Rather than having blinders on, which often happens with a challenge, so that we see it from a very narrow perspective, how can we include their perspective of love, kindness, and goodwill?

I hope that as you go about your day today, you can find that space within, that pause, that quiet where you can recognize an impulse to want to be kind and loving. Maybe you can't take it any further than that. There is no need to feel guilty or feel that you're not loving. Just find the impulse towards love. The desire to love is beneficial enough. Appreciate that in the privacy of your heart, so it doesn't get complicated with all the issues of life, of other people – should you or shouldn't you, of course you should – when no one needs to know. Thank you very much.