

Immeasurable!



Metta – Lovingkindness

Karuna – Compassion

Mudita – Joy

Upekkha – Equanimity

Course Syllabus

- Oct. 5: Overview of the four "Immeasurable" qualities
- Oct. 12: Metta – Lovingkindness
- Oct. 26: Karuna – Compassion
- Nov. 2: Mudita – Joy
- Nov. 9: Upekkha – Equanimity

Each class includes discussion, followed by a half hour meditation.

The meditation includes live music and some guided suggestions.

Why Am I Here?

First thought, best thought -
What is my intention for this class?

Let's Talk About Joy

As westerners, we tend to think of joy as an emotion that is seasoned with at least a bit of excitement.

But in Buddhist terms, joy is more about contentment – a sense that things are already OK as they are.

So, if we're expecting excitement, we might miss the real Mudita – which is a much gentler energy.

It's a child playing. It's a delight that comes without labels, self-consciousness, or a need for anything in the world to be other than it is.

Pranayam

Last time, we found a bit of "immeasurability" by suspending the breath between inhale and exhale.

Another way to suspend the breath is to segment it.

Take three short inhales - like sniffs - and then exhale fully.

Now, direct each "sniff:"

1. Belly

2. Ribs

3. Chest

- 4-5. Release all the breath.

Breath of Joy

We can joyfully illustrate the movement of the breath with our arms.

Stand, feet hips' width apart.

Sniff 1, Belly: Arms swing up and out to the front (palms down).

Sniff 2, Ribs: Arms swing down and out toward the sides (palms down).

Sniff 3, Chest: Arms swing straight up overhead (palms out).

Exhale 4-5, Release: Arms sweep down to ground, body folds over.

Repeat: Sweep up to position #1.

Measuring the Immeasurable

The experience of an immeasurable state inherently has no boundaries.

Distinguishing the Immeasurables, one from another, can be difficult.

So, from the standpoint of ordinary "measured" life, it is helpful to have benchmarks that direct us toward practices of lovingkindness, compassion, joy and equanimity.

Context vs. Content

Looking at the content of thoughts and interactions, it can be difficult to tell which quality is predominant.

For example, lovingkindness often includes compassion and/or joy for others. Equanimity is often experienced as compassion. And so on . . .

To distinguish which immeasurable is operating, it can be helpful to widen our perceptions.

We can look beyond the content of the experience, to the context in which it occurs.

The Immeasurables

Came in Two by Two

In Patanjali's Yoga Sutras, the four "Locks and Keys" are seen in pairs.

1. SUKHA & DUKHA - happy and unhappy folks - create a context for:

MAITRI (METTA) & KARUNA - friendliness (kindness) & compassion.

2. PUNYA & APUNYA - virtuous & non-virtuous folks and situations - create a context for:

MUDITA & UPEKKHA - delight (joy) & detachment (equanimity).

Personal vs. Social

Pair #1 - METTA & KARUNA are activated in a personal context.

People can be happy or unhappy in relationship to their individual lives. E.g., to feel healthy and happy - or ill and miserable.

Pair #2 - MUDITA & UPEKKHA are activated in a social context.

To take joy in what is virtuous and detach from what is not, requires a concept of Cosmos. We rejoice in the right order of things, or practice equanimity when society goes awry.

Metta and Mudita ~

Which is Which?

Metta is often described as experiencing a sense of lovingkindness toward another, regardless of one's own circumstances.

Mudita is often described as appreciative joy – happiness in another's happiness, regardless of one's own circumstances.

This may seem like splitting hairs. And the literature can be confusing, with the same example used to illustrate different immeasurables.

Social Beings

Humans are social animals. Most of what we do - and are - happens in the context of relationship.

Metta and Karuna primarily operate one-on-one. For instance, a mother nursing her child might be experiencing Metta - and Karuna if the child is colicky.



Joy in Context

When a relationship is experienced in a context larger than that between individuals - families, organizations, societies, Cosmos - it can invite the qualities of Mudita and Upekkha.

For example, the Mudita of a mother watching a school play includes the experience of seeing her child fitting into the right-functioning of a social organization.

If the experience is an unhappy one, Upekkha might be called for.

Not Mutually Exclusive

Once you experience an immeasurable state, figuring out which one you are in becomes unimportant.

Because these states are unbounded, they can mix and blend.

At the school play, the mother's closeness to her child can give the experience a "Metta" tint – while seeing her child in this larger context makes it more "Mudita" colored.

Should the child forget her lines – Karuna (compassion) might mix with Upekkha (detached equilibrium).

Eating the Immeasurables

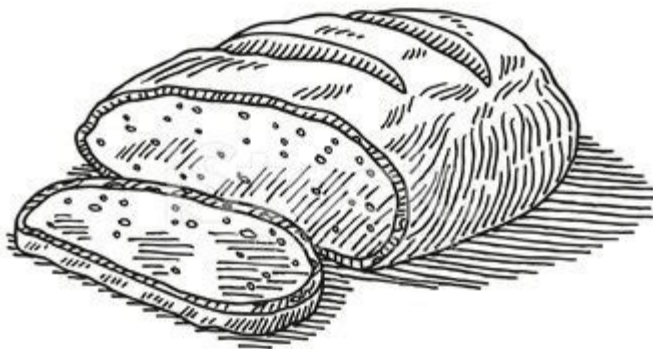
Let's take a common experience and run it through the Immeasurables. Say, eating lunch.

Metta – Let's have lunch together!

Karuna – I see that you're hungry. I'll give you my lunch.

Mudita – I enjoy bringing an offering to the monastery at lunchtime.

Upekkha – Sometimes there's lunch, sometimes not. That's just the way it is.



Journaling

Think of a life experience – something fairly ordinary, like cooking a meal, taking care of a child, interacting at the workplace, going on a vacation, reading a book . . .

and look at it four different ways - through the lenses of metta, karuna, mudita, and upekkha.

Far Enemies

Arati – ill will overtly expressed – can block Mudita in various ways:

Boredom. Passively refusing to participate – usually with grumpiness.

Aversion. Actively pushing away experience, because you don't want it.

Resentment or Grudge. Feeling that life has been unfair! That you personally are singled out for suffering.

Jealousy or Envy. Ill-will toward someone who has what you want.

Greed. Taking what you want, regardless of the needs of others.

Near Enemies

Sometimes the possibility of Mudita gets eroded away by behavior that can seem appreciative – but isn't.

Over-enthusiasm. One can get excited by someone's joy in a grabby way – "I want some!"

Pride. Joy in another's accomplishment, reflected back upon oneself.

Hypocrisy. Pretending to be happy for someone, when one is not.

Opportunism. Using someone's good fortune for personal gain.

Taking Over. "I can do it better!"

Virtue?

Patanjali's word punya - virtue - can be confusing. It is speaking to the cosmic order, which is bound by immutable laws (like mathematics). Cosmos is inherently virtuous.

So punya doesn't mean morality in the Western sense. It's in the realm of the music of the spheres, the changing of the seasons, etc.

Being virtuous means being in accord with laws, practices, and rituals that reinforce the social order - which is ideally designed to uphold the cosmic order on a human scale.

Appreciation

So the practice of mudita requires accepting the inherent rightness of the cosmos. Mudita is about appreciating things as they are.

Various monastic writers talk about the way in which a mendicant life reinforces mudita. Few topics can trigger us more than food – likes, dislikes, not having enough . . .

By eating only what is offered,

1. monks accept what is given, and
2. they live in the knowledge that their survival depends upon the generosity of others.

Supported by Goodness

"Mudita is . . . a feeling of being supported by goodness. When you appreciate goodness, you feel lifted up by it. You're not doing anything any more. You are in some ways being acted upon or being affected by something, so the sense of self is far softer."

- Ajahn Sucitto



Mantra

Mudita is about experiencing delight in the cosmic order.

The Sanskrit Mantra you'll hear during our Mudita meditation is:

SA TA NA MA

स त न म

Out of infinity, come birth, life, death, re-birth.

Taking in these ancient syllables, we accept the truth of our being.

Meditation

