

Tough Love

Many good Buddhists are complaining to me that people in the modern age abuse their generosity and kindness. This is a real problem. There are two answers to this. The first is for good Buddhists to stick together; the second is to cultivate a different kind of loving – tough love.

This is a term used in rehabilitation to mean a kind of caring that promotes the maximum degree of independence for the patient. We do not do something for someone else that they would benefit from doing themselves. This attitude is also a very good way of characterising the tough Thai forest monastic tradition. In this tradition, however, we learn not just how to protect ourselves as we care for others but also how to reach our own maximum potential as practitioners. As we see deeper into our own minds we realise that when our mindfulness becomes very tough and strong (in samādhi) it is naturally both blissful and loving.

Then we can even be grateful, in a more comfortable setting, for a social incentive that pushes us to the limit.

I offer this for your reflection.

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