

Guided Meditation: Meditating, Not Being Someone

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So, hello everyone and welcome. And to begin, it might be helpful to think of meditation as an activity we are engaging in that we're giving ourselves over to, then that meditation is a time to be somebody. Right? Many times human beings are busy being some character, some identity, some image of who they're supposed to be or how they want to be seen. So, and I think because we're sitting quietly in meditation, sometimes the balance is we can all too easily go into who I am, not what I'm doing. And so, for example, if someone is fully engaged in playing music in a concert or playing a game, sports, many things that there are activities that are really fun and engaging and get absorbed in, if we spend too much time thinking, I am the musician, I am the athlete, I am this and that, and then we're concerned what people think about us, and we're analyzing ourselves, we're having commentary about ourselves, judging what we're doing, judging ourselves as being the doer, that it very quickly... It obviously interferes with playing music, interferes with the sport or the activity we're doing.

But that's less obvious sitting in meditation because we so easily get pulled into, you know, we're not doing a lot. It looks like almost like we're doing nothing. So we're not so engaged in this full, embodied, interesting way. All our senses and activities are not absorbed in it. And so it's easy for attention to go flow into the world of being someone. I am a bad meditator. I am a good meditator. I am someone who has to go shopping today. And how do I shop in such a way that the other shoppers think that I'm a good shopper? Something, you know.

So in sitting in meditation... You might, and you don't think this way probably, and so I'm offering kind of a little different idea, but you might want to shift from any concern with who you are, any judgment's idea of who you are, and focus more on the activity of being centered, being engaged in the meditation itself, the activity of meditation. And that's a number

of activities. One that I found very helpful over these years that I've been meditating is to not be too passive with the posture of meditation, to have a little bit, just the right amount of intentionality in sitting upright. So that even if you need to use like a backrest, where you're sitting, a couch or a chair, or if you have to lay down, there's a way of assuming those postures where there's a little intentionality involved. The, maybe the, you could sit up a little straighter. Maybe the positioning of the hands is, in Zen, they hold the hands off the legs, up, so that usually the hands are together and is one resting in the other, right kind of just below the belly button. So it's not resting on anything in particular.

And... or people who lay down sometimes will have their arms such a way at right angle with their elbow on their side, resting on the floor or the bed, and their upper arm pointing right to the ceiling, you know, like this. And so there's some intentionality. We're engaged with the body when we meditate, and being careful of the position of the head and... and watch the body so you don't sink or get contracted. And then we are engaging the mind. Not in an intense way, we're gauging the mind to be at ease. So we're attentive to the mind, noticing when stress comes in, tightness comes in. We're engaged in feelings, so the sensations of the body. We're there in an easeful way, but we're engaged in tracking, in a sense, the shifting, changing sensations of breathing. You know, someone who's playing basketball or some ball game is tracking the ball as it moves around the court, you know, the eyes don't go off it. They're fully engaged.

So there's an activity of meditation, and how to do that activity so we're fully in it. And it doesn't really matter, you know, all kinds of things, that ways you might answer the question, who are you? It doesn't matter here. Who are you is almost in meditation. It's almost like a, you know, a jacket you wear that you can take off. And you're taking it off here now, so you can do this activity of meditation today. And you can put on it again later, but it's not really needed right now. Just the activity.

So to assume intentional posture, and if you're able to sit upright, there's something profound about the upright meditation, cross-legged meditation posture. They can allow the body to relax deeply when it's well aligned. The two postures that are most allow the body to relax are are laying down and sitting upright. And to gently close the eyes and to begin gathering in your different attentional faculties so that all your attentional capacities are gathered together for the purpose of the activity of mindfulness. The activity of awareness, so that you're awareing, you're minding, you're feeling.

So begin by feeling, using your capacity to feel, to begin gathering yourself together in the activity of attention, feeling the body, and letting yourself roam around the body, and then

as if you're familiarizing yourself with the location where the activity of meditation will be happening. Getting to know here, this place, this time, to become more centered here, to be able to give yourself to this activity. It can help to relax the body and... Adjust the body so that maybe it softens and relax more. In many physical activities, we limber up the body, prepare the body for the activity. In some activities, we adjust the mind, letting go of whatever is not the activity, thoughts and concerns, and becoming centered, oriented with the mind. Getting focused here and now, maybe focused on breathing, focused on feeling the sensations of breathing, and gently setting the mind on the task of knowing your present moment experience.

So you gather together knowing the activity of breathing, feeling the activity of breathing, and let the breathing support you to relax and to calm the body and mind. And for now it doesn't matter who you are. It doesn't matter where you've been, where you're going, what you've done and what you will do. It matters only now to gather yourself into this activity of meditation. And to do so in a way that is centering, quieting, calming, with no strain, no tension, or at least leaning into the places of no tension, engaging in the activity of mindfulness, meditation, and any thought, concern, that has to do with putting on the jacket of self. I am this. Take it off, let it go. Give yourself over to this activity, as you might already do in some activities you really enjoy doing.

With whatever calm, subtleness you might feel, let that be the location, the place, the approach, to being fully engaged in the activity of attending to a calm, settled way of being. A calm, settled awareness here and in gathering together attention. That can include appreciation for whatever degree of subtleness and calm awareness you have. And as we end this sitting, perhaps you can consider too much involvement with I am, with self-preoccupation about who we are and our judgments about it, preoccupation with it, interferes with her ability to listen well to others, to see others clearly, to appreciate others, and to care. May... our involvement with meditation support us to be better listeners, better attenders, better appreciators of others. May it help us remember our goodwill wishing others well. May all beings be happy. May all beings be safe. May all beings be peaceful. May all beings be free. Thank you.