

Guided Meditation: The Goal in the Means

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Hello, welcome. One of the principles of Buddhist meditation, early Buddhist meditation as I understand it, is that it's possible to have the goal of practice be found in the means, the way we practice to the goal. The goal and the means are not radically separate. If the goal is to be free of all clinging, then the way to attain that goal is to begin not clinging now. To engage in meditation, to engage in ethics, to engage in all the parts of Buddhist practice—concentration practice, mindfulness practice, loving-kindness practice, compassion—to all of them, to have them have a quality of non-clinging, non-attachment, non-assertiveness, non-strain, right in them. It doesn't have to be dramatic, but to remember, oh yes, how I practice, how I walk this path, needs to contain part of the goal.

As practice matures, that connection becomes more and more obvious so that the vision of how we can practice without strain, without attachment, without selfishness, without self-preoccupation, becomes clear and clear. It isn't that we then can do it 100%, but we can do it to a greater percentage of the time and greater degree. With that, as we grow in non-clinging, non-attachment, that doesn't leave us as a blank. It doesn't diminish us as human beings. What it does is it makes room. What diminishes us is the clinging, is the attachment.

As clinging dissolves, lessens, it makes room inside for profound human natural capacities that thrive in the open light, in the sunlight of awareness, the sunlight that's unobstructed, the awareness that allows something from deep inside to arise. Those are two things that I want to highlight. They don't have to be any separate from them. They're not necessarily two different things. Two ways of saying the same thing, or maybe two sides of the hand. One is that there's a natural inclination to be ethical, because we see and feel that to be unethical involves some clinging.

There's a deeper and deeper sensitivity to the undesirable impact of clinging. The other is that it awakens a very deep, innate, natural capacity, mammalian capacity for care, compassion, kindness. So non-clinging is found in even a beginner's practice. Someone brand new to the practice, some modicum, some reference point of not clinging, not getting attached, and that making room for a deep sensitivity to care, to being ethical. These all are self-reinforcing. They build on each other.

To assume a meditation posture, and right there in the posture, the relaxing in the posture is itself an expression of starting to let go of clinging. It's hard to be tense without some grasping, tightening, holding onto something. Gently closing the eyes and appreciating that this body that we have with all its challenges is a profound instrument, musical instrument, tool, a profound home for some of the deepest capacities of freedom, knowing, knowing both clinging and letting go. It's the home for a deep capacity to care, to love, that has more room to grow, the less we cling. Taking a few long, slow, deep breaths, letting go relaxing as you exhale. Appreciate being present in an embodied way as you breathe in deeply, just enough that it remains comfortable.

Relaxing as you exhale, letting your breathing return to normal. On the inhale, feel, sense, recognize any tension, pressure, agitation associated with the thinking mind. Feeling the thinking mind and relaxing on the exhale. Letting go. Letting the thinking mind become quieter, calmer. So there is more room and space and awareness to feel the global body.

Then lowering your attention into your torso, lowering your attention so it's centered on wherever it's most comfortable to rest attention in the torso and to attend to breathing. Remembering to let the experience of breathing, let it remind you every breath, every inhale and exhale, to keep the awareness, attention, awake, open to this present moment with as little clinging and attachment as is easy to do. Spreading your awareness through the whole body in a relaxed, open way to allow the sensations of the body to show themselves throughout the body, each in its own time, each within the container of your posture, the shape of your body, allowing awareness, allowing sensations, to receive, take in the experience of your body, without clinging, preferences, without resistance, avoidance, for another minute or so to just allow the calm, the subtleness, the connectedness you might have after meditating for a while. Allow yourself to feel fully what's available now with a non-clinging, receptive awareness.

As we come to the end of this sitting, feel, reflect, consider, how a state of non-clinging, non-resisting awareness that's available to be present for the world, for others. How that non-clinging can guide you in how you relate to others. How is non-clinging a protection for you?

How is non-clinging, your non-clinging, a protection for others? May it be that the intimate connection between staying aware, being aware, resting in awareness, and not clinging, be a means by which we can live in this world with kindness and care, sensitivity, and goodwill. May it be that spreading from us, each of us, is so, some greater capacity to care for the welfare and happiness of others while caring for our own.

May all beings be happy. May all beings be safe. May all beings be peaceful. May all beings be free. Thank you.