

## Guided Meditation: Mindfulness with Care

**Gil Fronsdal**

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So, hello and welcome to this fifth meditation this week that generally was oriented towards the source of caregiving within us. The meditations have been leading up to the talks that follow. Today I would like to do a meditation that calls upon a little bit of imagination to support mindfulness, maybe mindfulness of breathing. This is a very basic meditation. It's based on the idea that one of the real basic and ordinary forms of caregiving operates best when there are no attachments, no clinging, no anxiety, no fear, no greed, no hatred. Somehow the heart is at ease, it's open, it's clean, it's free of these kinds of obstacles that might be in there, disturbances.

The ordinary capacity to care thrives or comes out almost naturally when the heart is no longer disturbed. Can you imagine, maybe by remembering some particular special moment in your life, that temporarily your heart's at peace? That your heart is whole, content, that your heart has no disturbances, nothing it's worried about, no attachments that are activated and present for you. What is it like to be in your body, be in your heart, be with yourself? Imagine what that's like. You might even imagine a location where such a thing has happened or can happen.

In this kind of scenario, is there some kind of inclination, maybe not intentional, but inclination to care, take time to value, see as important, help maintain, help benefit, the immediacy of what's around you? Maybe the location itself, the physical material, the place, the beings in the area, and maybe with yourself. One of the ways we care for ourselves, usually not so at all intentional, is to breathe. The way that we breathe shifts and changes based on what we're doing as the body tries to adjust to do the job it needs to be done, to most support you in whatever you're doing. See breathing as part of this caregiving field that we live in, that operates best when there's no attachments, no disturbances of the heart.

So, to assume a meditation posture and to gently close the eyes in a very simple way, become attuned to your body breathing. Be attuned to the simple rhythm and speed of your breathing. Notice what parts of your body are activated as you breathe. Without any idea it should be any different. It's okay how you are. Just know it. Discover how it is now.

As you exhale, relax your body as you exhale, relaxing your thinking mind. As you exhale, relax the area around your heart, softening the heart center. Then imagine or visualize yourself, how it would be like to be at ease, content, undisturbed, and untroubled heart, without any attachment or compulsions, any conflicts in the heart. Imagine your heart at ease with itself, content. Might there be, when the heart is at ease, untroubled, undisturbed, that there's a natural care, goodwill, kindness, compassion, gentleness, with which the heart supports you, guides you to be with your breathing, the breathing body.

As you are aware of the breathing, the present moment, perhaps your awareness, your mindfulness, can be informed and guided by a simple attitude of care. Partly why you want to stay in the present, not to get lost in thought, is because the care and kindness feels good, maybe feels better than the alternative. What if mindfulness is a natural caregiving impulse? How would you be mindful if the natural caregiving impulse was included?

As we come to the end of the sitting, if today or other times when you're meditating, you feel calmer and more settled at the end of a meditation, does that somehow influence your inclination to care, to care for yourself, your environment, care for others? In what way does care, caring for others, for ourselves, our life, become natural or easy when we're settled and calm? Might it be useful to stay close through the day as a touchstone, your capacity for calm, settled attention, so that as you encounter people and beings around you, you discover your natural inclination to care, to be caring, to be benevolent, to be kind, kind-hearted?

May it be that this meditation we do supports us to go through the world with a caring heart, wishing may all beings be happy, may all beings be safe, may all beings be peaceful. May all beings be free. May we give a lot of value, a lot of importance to our ability to stay close to a natural capacity for care. May we care for this world. Thank you.