

Guided Meditation: Composed and Oriented

Gil Fronsdal

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So hello and welcome to what is in California, the 7 a.m. morning meditation. And to introduce the meditation, I think that it's fair to say that for many people in daily life, our capacity for awareness, attention, is pulled around left and right, up and down, by whatever we're thinking about. Or our capacity to be aware in a clear way is lost, absorbed into our thoughts as we, and the thoughts can be a little bit like a popcorn machine that's just popping up all kinds of thoughts or like a blender that's spinning around all kinds of ingredients. And so the mind might not be very still. It might be somewhat agitated, the thinking mind. It might be chasing after thoughts, stories, ideas.

And it might be jumping around a lot between themes. They might be involved in multiple tracks at once, tracks of concerns or ideas. And I met a man once who said that he had seven tracks of different themes going on in his thought stream all the time. And I never quite understood how that could be, but that's what he said. And so one of the tasks at the beginning of meditation is to settle that, to compose oneself, to orient oneself. Right?

And it's not so different from how we would do that in a lot of different settings, that we would prepare ourselves physically and psychologically for some kind of activity we're going to do. If you haven't shot a basketball, thrown a basketball into a hoop for a long time, but it seems somewhat important to do it well. You might stand at the free throw line and take a moment or two to orient yourself, to compose yourself, to gather yourself, to really be there in your body and take some deep breath or two, get yourself oriented, aim toward the basket, and really kind of engage with your whole body. And your whole mind focused on that, oriented towards that basket, to shoot the basketball. It might be that, you know, you have to give a speech, and before you get in front of the stage, you orient yourself, compose yourself in a similar kind of way. It could be that it's some kind of artwork that you're doing at home or

craft, where it's not just a matter of sitting down and just starting to do it, but you would kind of orient yourself, compose yourself.

And the art of composing one's mind, so the mind becomes oriented, becomes quieter, becomes less scattered, less jumping around, but here to be present is an art that is really useful that can be done throughout the day. The more you become skilled at that, rather than giving free range or thinking mind, to just pull us left and right, up and down, and to be lost in those currents of concerns. We kind of regain ourselves fully when we get composed and settled here, and the thinking mind doesn't predominate. So with that, you know, and I'm also thinking about someone who does something like Aikido or martial art, where maybe they would first get oriented, get composed themselves, and maybe sitting on their knees with their hands on their thighs, and kind of gathering themselves together to be here for this activity. So with that spirit, to begin by knowing what you're going to do is not let your thinking mind do whatever it wants to do, and hopefully it comes along, but you're going to gather yourself, orient yourself, compose yourself, to be here and now settled, not swept away in the thinking mind, Not that you're going to stop it, but not swept away. But you're going to be oriented in the body, ready to be here with the body breathing.

So this is why assuming the posture at the beginning of a meditation is important. Assuming a posture that is somewhat intentional. So you kind of... gathering your body so that the whole body supports being gathered, being here. So it's kind of intentional that the body is going to be composed here and now. Generally it means if you're sitting, to sit a little bit more upright.

If you're lying down, adjusting the spine and the shoulder blades, the head, the spine, in such a way that it's a little bit more alert, less casual, a little bit more intentional. So yes, I am here. And to lower the gaze, lowering the gaze is beginning to shift and change from a scattered mind to an oriented mind, where the thinking mind begins to settle and turn towards the present moment, maybe gently closing your eyes, and being somewhat definitive about orienting yourself to how and where you experience your breathing while you meditate. Gently, in a relaxed way, gather yourself, your body, mind, heart, mind, around the body's experience of breathing. And in a gentle, enjoyable way, like you're getting ready, preparing yourself, gathering yourself to throw a basketball or something. Gently take some deeper, fuller breaths and exhale to let go of everything else. And then letting your breathing return to normal.

And as if your body's experience of breathing is inviting you to be its partner, inviting you to be its partner in a dance or companion in a walk or give yourself over to the experience of the

body breathing. As if here, through your breathing, you're going to have a deeper encounter with yourself. You're going to listen, feel, sense deeper truths that are not accessible with a scattered, spinning thinking mind. Here, compose, gathered, would be all you need to be your own teacher, being a partner, a companion to the movements of breathing, changing sensations of breathing in your body, following the invitation to quiet the thinking mind so you're more able to sense and hear, be available for what's deep in your experience, the path to greater stillness and peace. From time to time during a meditation session, to take care to... reorient yourself or recompose yourself to be established here as if being mindful and aware here, now is the most important thing to be doing.

And as we come to the end of the sitting, even now is a good time to compose oneself here and now again to gather oneself together, rooted here in this place, this time, to gather oneself to be grounded in the body and your seat, to settle the thinking mind so there can be a greater focus to here and now, to whatever task is at hand, and the task at the end of the sitting, if you'd like. Is to consider how you've changed in the course of the meditation. Are you calmer, more grounded, more unified, settled, quieter? More open, with kindness and goodwill, more accessible. Whatever way that you've benefited, consider, imagine how that can be included in how you orient yourself to be with other people, to be oriented or collected in such a way that there's a respect and a care for others, a presence of mind and body that's ready to take in, invite the wholeness of another person into our attention, and imagining how the benefits of this meditation are can be used for simple benefits for others you encounter. Maybe through acts of goodwill, attitudes of goodwill.

- May all beings be happy.
- May all beings be peaceful.
- May all beings be safe.
- May all beings be free.

And may I be nourished in having good will for all beings that I encounter. Thank you.