

Guided Meditation: Being Happy

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So hello and welcome. And here we are, the fifth meditation connected to the teachings on the *Kālama Sutta*, which are phenomenal ethical teachings of the Buddha, though they're not called ethical by him. They're called how to know for yourself what to do and what not to do. And so it has a much bigger, wider meaning than the English word ethics. It's about our whole life.

The final criteria has to do with happiness and the stepping away from the activities that bring about the opposite of happiness. That is called, usually in English, Buddhist English, suffering. Some people translate the word as stress. So to sit with a happy orientation towards happiness. It's not easy to be happy sometimes, but it is possible to be happy. And it's possible to start appreciating that happiness, the path to happiness, begins not by everything in the world being perfect, not by somehow magic happening.

It's not a pill or a magic wand that somehow gives us a state of happiness. It begins by how we act, how we act in our mind, in our hearts. And that we learn slowly, perhaps very little steps, maybe baby steps, the next moment, to engage it, to do an act of knowing, of awareness, of showing up, of being present. The very way of doing it we appreciate, the very way we do it is done in a calm, nice, maybe even a way that brings us some deep satisfaction or joy or happiness. It's an amazing, amazing capacity that human beings have to be aware, to be conscious. And all too often we fill awareness, fill consciousness, fill thoughts with preoccupations, judgments, concerns, reactions, that we don't really appreciate the miracle of being aware, the miracle of mindfulness.

And it is something that we contribute to. It's not like we sit and wait to be aware, exactly. But there's a way in which we participate. We step into awareness. We engage with the present moment. We say, yes, here, I'll be here.

In this amazing miracle, this amazing phenomena, that we appreciate independent of the crowded concerns we fill our consciousness with, fill our thoughts and awareness with. To step away, step back from those concerns, to appreciate the very act of being present and contributing to the next moment of presence, next moment of awareness, with what could maybe be called a yes, a kind of gentle enthusiasm for being present now, being aware now, where being aware is more important than what you're aware of. So to assume a meditation posture and gently close your eyes, and if you're a long-time meditator, meaning you've done it, meditated for a few years now, perhaps the meditation posture is familiar to you. Assuming the meditation posture, closing your eyes and feeling it is a homecoming. Maybe it's a good place. Maybe there's some happiness in putting aside the concerns of the day, of life.

To be here, present for your immediate experience, the simplicity of now and this body at this time, where there's nothing to do that you have to do at this moment. Things can wait. Taking some gentle, appreciative breaths, taking some fuller breaths to appreciate more fully the amazing process of breathing and being in a body and in a way that is good for you, maybe even enjoyable. As you exhale, soften your body and letting your breathing return to normal. And with the support of breathing, with the sensations that come alive with each in-breath and out-breath, be aware of the present moment, be aware of breathing. With a very simple yes, very simple yes, appreciation of this ability to be aware.

Putting aside trying to do something with meditation, so you have more space in the mind to appreciate how each moment, the next moment, you can step into it with a yes to being aware. Simply, relaxedly, maybe how fortunate it is to be able to choose awareness, choose to be aware. Perhaps you can appreciate stepping into this moment fully in the miracle of being aware, by letting there be a slight smile on your lips, just enough maybe to bring you a little bit of delight. And that delight informs how you're aware the next chance you wake up. In meditation, you are allowed to be happy. And maybe there's something about here and now.

Maybe the simplicity of being mindful and present. There's something about being alive that provides you with some joy or happiness. Or maybe there's more well-being than you avail yourself of. As we continue, avail yourself of the well-being or happiness that seems natural enough to occur. If you're really present for it here in your life, for no reason except for being alive and breathing and being mindful. And as we come to the end of this sitting, to notice are there any ways that you're calmer than when you started? More settled? Any ways in which you feel more comfortable in your body, mind and heart. And is there anything about how you are now that could support you to feel happy? Happy at least that you're like this now.

Happy for what you've seen and learned.

Happy for your state. Happy to have a practice of mindfulness meditation. Happy to have a practice of mindfulness meditation you can bring with you into your life. These are other simple ordinary ways that you can feel happy. Now, as you breathe, as you feel yourself more fully in this body, and as you sense the space around your body out into the world, and radiating from your body into the world, imagining you can share happiness, well-being and well-wishing with all beings. And if it can help you feel happy for your own good capacity for goodwill, offer well-wishing.

May all beings be happy. May all beings be safe. May all beings be peaceful. May all beings be free. And on this day as you go forth into the world, may it be that your ability to be present and attentive, awake to the world, may it be that it makes room for all of us to experience more simple happiness. And may we share our simple happiness with others. Thank you.