

Guided Meditation: Awareness Including Everything

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Hello and greetings. For this meditation today, I'd like to suggest that in our life, the context in which we're in makes a big difference in how much of ourselves we can accept, include, or hold peacefully. If we're in certain social situations, we might feel that we can't quite be ourselves. Maybe you feel like singing, but you're at a funeral and it just doesn't seem right to sing the song that you had in mind, especially when you're just a guest in the back row. Or it might be that the clothes you wear are dirty—maybe you've been working in the garden and your t-shirt and pants are muddy and dirty. It just doesn't seem right to go to that very formal state dinner that you were invited to, and it just seems like that's not going to be okay.

So there's all kinds of ways in which context affects how we feel about ourselves. But we can go in some contexts where how we are is accepted. Some of the advantages of feeling at home is that at home, some people can feel like they can just be themselves. No matter what, they can just wear the clothes they wear, speak out loud, sing out loud if they want, do whatever they want—it's okay there. If we go out into the natural world, maybe safely, happily alone in a wide, expansive, natural setting, it might feel like it's so wonderful because all of who you are can be included. There might even be parts of yourself that you're not particularly proud of, but it's almost like it's okay out there. Everything—there's space, there's room for everything.

It's as if the natural world, the sky, the ground, the trees, accepts us as we are. And it feels like we can kind of be at ease, deep, deep ease with how we are. So meditation can be a context that's a little bit like being in the natural world, where we expand the awareness in a sense so that everything can be included. Not included by acting on it or speaking on it, but the kind of inclusion where even if we don't approve of it, even if we feel like we have some shortcomings, it's okay. In this context, in this setting, it's okay. We can include it all by making our awareness bigger, wider, more open, more inclusive.

In the awareness that says, "This too can be here," there is a confidence that kind of has made a large room, a space for many things to coexist. If we have some shortcomings, it's not the whole world. It's just part of this wholeness, the fullness of who we are. So *samādhi*, one way of understanding *samādhi* is that it's a unification, a gathering together of all we are. So all of it can be there together peacefully, where we don't pick anything up necessarily or act on anything, believe anything, but everything can be there in the scope of awareness. There's no resistance or pushing anything away.

And there's a groundedness. There's a center, a focal point. It's like walking on a trail in the wilderness. In the natural world that just holds us and accepts all of who we are, it feels like. But we're clearly, solidly putting our feet on the ground, touching it, being here, being here, being on this spot. And there's this particularity of the walking which keeps us here, grounded, and the wide open space that includes all of who we are.

So the footsteps in meditation can be the breathing. Stay with the breath one step at a time. And whatever else is happening, don't be involved in it. Don't be reactive to it. Just kind of have the attitude: this too is included in the wide space of awareness. Let it be in the periphery. Let it recede from the center, with the center being the breathing, breathing in and breathing out. All things included.

So assuming a centering posture—a posture that centers you here and now in this place and time—feeling the weight of your body against whatever surface it rests on. And from that surface, like it's arising out of it, take some deeper breaths and relax back into the pull of gravity, the contact of your weight against that surface on the exhale. Letting your breathing return to normal, and taking some time to soften, relax your body, and then relaxing the thinking mind. Soften it as if you make wide space all around the thinking mind into which it can dissolve, rest. And taking a few breaths to have a global awareness of yourself, almost like you have a wide, expansive view of all the space around you and allowing all the space of awareness to hold all of who you are. No part left out.

Whatever is happening has its place. Whatever is happening for you and whatever is most concerning, it has a place within the whole. And then lowering your attention into the torso to feel the alternation of breathing in and breathing out. Perhaps finding a place in your body where the beginning of the inhale is the grounding place, the place where your feet touch the ground. And as you exhale, relaxing and returning to this grounding spot, centering spot, centered on breathing. A gentle, calm, peripheral awareness is where everything else is included. Everything can be there in the periphery. All of yourself can be here. But the central focus is on breathing, as if it's in the middle of all things, as if the breathing is the

center bottom of a bowl.

And the edges of the bowl hold all things, but invite all things to settle, roll down towards the center, to become quiet, calm at the center, a gathering here. If anything takes you away from breathing, like thinking might, recognize it. Allow it to be included. But let it be on the periphery. And let the precious food of awareness flow into breathing. Let breathing be the center of all things. As you exhale, calm and quiet your thinking mind. Instead of having awareness filled with thoughts, allow the quieting of thinking to create more open space of awareness that can hold all things. Nothing needs to be excluded. Everything can be included in the wide open mind, in the wide open heart of awareness.

Centered here, now, in the body breathing. And then as we come to the end of the sitting, imagine your awareness, your eyesight, can spread out across the land like you're standing on a hilltop and can see far away. You can see a wide area where people live and move around and engage their daily life, where everyone is part of this wide natural world. And in the safety of the hilltop, no one needs to be left out. No one needs to be excluded from awareness, even from the heart. In the safety and the stability of that hilltop by yourself, it might feel easy to gaze upon the world with goodwill, with kindness, with care.

And you might consider how if all the people in the county, the province, the state, the country you're in—if they could somehow for one day be happy, one day feel at ease and safe and peaceful—what a phenomenally different world we'll live in. And while that might not happen today, it's phenomenally valuable and special that you might gaze upon the world with that kind of goodwill. Someone should do that. Someone should wish that for everyone. May all beings be happy. May all beings be safe. May all beings be peaceful. May all beings be free of suffering. And may whatever degree you can wish this on the world, may it spread through the world like the wonderful sweet scent of some wonderful flower. May your goodwill spread through the world and make a difference. Thank you.