

Guided Meditation: Full Awareness with No Thanks

Gil Fronsdal

November 05, 2025

Keywords: mindfulness, awareness, Zen, no gaining idea, radical acceptance, letting go, unwholesome thoughts, clinging, present moment, well-wishing

Warm greetings from IMC, Insight Meditation Center, and welcome to this morning meditation. As an introduction, when I was beginning, when I began in my Buddhist practice many years ago, I started with a Zen practice, eventually going to a Zen monastery and practicing there for three years. One of the teachings there was a kind of teaching of unconditional, radical acceptance of the present moment, with emphasis on no gaining idea—not a practice to attain anything or change anything, but rather to face the moment fully and completely as it is, without wanting it to be different or trying to make it different, just as it is. It was a wonderful practice for me, but at some point I questioned it. That was when I became the gardener in the monastery, and I loved being the gardener. It was very comforting, nurturing, nourishing to be there, taking care of the plants.

One of the things that I did there and relaxed, it was kind of a nice way, was to weed the flower beds, the vegetable beds, and it was part of the job. It was nice to do that too. I enjoyed the physical work and the simplicity of it, and how it didn't require a lot of thinking and planning. Then at some point I began wondering, why is it that I'm allowed to pull the weeds from the garden, but in this practice we do here, we're not allowed to pull the weeds from the mind? I couldn't understand why that was the case. So I decided at some point that there was nothing wrong with pulling weeds from the mind. It was as natural as pulling weeds from the garden.

As simple and straightforward, it didn't have to involve any hostility or aversion or trying to do too much. Of course you take some of the weeds out. It was a simple, nice thing to do. So I learned that you could do that with the mind as well. Of course you take out the weeds of the mind. Of course you let them go. Of course you leave them alone. It doesn't have to be out of aversion or necessarily trying to attain something and get something, except maybe to allow

the natural growth within, the natural way in which our inner life can grow and develop. In the space that is left when we take out the weeds, more sunlight gets into our hearts and our inner life. There's more space to grow, and more of the nutrients in the soil are available for the growth of our good inner life.

So in this meditation, I would like to encourage you to do two things. First, recognize what is happening in the present moment with a recognition or an awareness that is clear, a kind of fullness, a kind of completeness of awareness. So if you're breathing in, a complete knowing, a full knowing of the experiences, sensations of breathing in and breathing out. If there's a sensation elsewhere in your body, if there's an emotion, if there's a thought and thinking, know it clearly, fully. The act of knowing, the act of becoming clearly aware, is an act of kind of a relaxed, easy, deliberate, full knowing. That has more oomph, more juice, more energy in it than the energy that goes into distracted thinking. Energy that goes into identification and being caught in what's happening. So the clear knowing, clear awareness.

The second is if you have weeds growing in your mind—thoughts and impulses and maybe even attitudes and dispositions that appear that are not so useful, not helpful—let them go or don't pick them up. But do that also with a kind of clear "thank you, no thank you." Maybe just a second, "no thank you," where that "no thank you," that stepping away from, leaving it alone, is also kind of a clear, intentional, full act. "No thank you." Leaving it alone, pulling out the weed. "No, no thank you." So that you're divesting yourself or stepping away from or opening up into a bigger experience of clarity that comes from having pulled out the weeds of the mind.

So assuming a meditation posture and gently close your eyes, gently taking some long, slow deep breaths, relaxing on the exhale, breathing normally and quietly, calmly, without any strain. Know the inhale as if it's the only thing to know, know it fully, as if it's the center of the universe. Gently, quietly, know the exhale as its own amazing event that deserves full awareness. Remembering the rhythm of breathing in and breathing out, to ache as often as breathing in and breathing out. To be fully present, know one thing as it's happening. And if the weeds of the mind, if distractions, especially thoughts and attitudes that are unwholesome, unhealthy, debilitating, fully know that it's there, and fully, gently, in a calm, calm way, say "no thank you."

In the "no thank you," you divest your energy, attention, identification with those thoughts, with those attitudes, and invest in being aware, openly, freely, without the weeds, practicing a succession of clear, relaxed moments—moments of awareness, of mindfulness, of knowing and sensing what is happening in the present while being centered on breathing. And when

useful, a clear, calm, simple "no thank you" to whatever arises, it's clearly best not to be engaged in, participating in. "No thank you." That returns you to that open, relaxed moments of awareness. In moments of clear, complete mindfulness. In moments of clear, complete, relax. "No, thank you."

Whatever we're aware of becomes empty of our clinging, of our preoccupation. And as we come to the end of the sitting, to see if there's some way as you exhale to relax deep inside in the core of your being, soften open in the core of your being, becoming empty of tension, grasping, resisting, racing against life. And from the core of a relaxed center, being aware of yourself, your surroundings, with an awareness that's empty of judgments and desires, even empty of self-assertion, just for a few moments. Awareness empty of self-concern, just open, clear knowing here. So there can be a deeper sensitivity, a deeper receptivity in this wonderful antenna we have in the heart or deep within that vibrates with care and love and kindness, receiving and broadcasting. The more empty we are, the clearer the signal is of love, kindness, goodwill, and to end the sitting with wishing of well-wishing, well-wishing for others, well-wishing for the whole world.

May all beings be happy. May all beings be safe. May all beings be peaceful. May all beings be free. And may the way that we're empty and open and receptive support us in living for the welfare and happiness of all. Thank you.