

Guided Meditation: Vast Empty Awareness

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Hello and welcome to this Friday morning meditation in Redwood City. Delighted to be here. And how I'm feeling at this moment is a little bit relevant to the topic of this week, emptiness today. Welcome. It feels a little bit like a dream, a little bit like a kind of a stream, you know, kind of a dreamlike to be getting up in the morning, coming down here in the dark, setting up all this electronics and talking into an empty room while at the same time feeling this warm, heartfelt connection to names in the chat and knowing some of the people who are here, and some of you have been doing this for a long time. And it's kind of an amazing dream-like experience that's very heartwarming and nice.

And the topic of the emptiness is often associated with the world being dream-like. Right. And the teachings of emptiness, at least in the Theravān tradition, the insight tradition here, is that it's really pointing to, encouraging us, giving us the background to help us understand the value of not clinging to anything, not taking this amazing capacity to be aware and having it bottled up, having it frozen, stopped, having it contracted, but rather, and have it be really heavy and dense, but rather to have our capacity to be aware, be phenomenally light, soft, as if it has no weight. And in doing so, we're not solidifying awareness. We're not tightening up around things and around concepts.

And that lack of solidification, that lack of contracting around things, clinging to things, can give a dream-like feeling that... unless you have nightmares, but a dream-like feeling that things are kind of, you know, like hologram, insubstantial, floating, not exactly real, but not unreal. So I'll guide you a little bit in this way. So to assume a meditation posture, And maybe first do feel the substantial nature of this body. And feeling the weight of the body against your chair, your cushion, the floor, your bed. Where the weight of your body, your body and its weight make contact with the surface that holds you up from the pull of gravity.

Take a deep inhale and exhale. Feel the contact. and relax, release into that support that holds your weight. You are here now, breathing naturally, normally. On the inhale, feel places in your body where you're holding tense, tight, contracted, even slightly. Even something which now wouldn't be called tension, but ever so slight tightening of the muscles around the hands.

On the exhale, relax. Relax the places of holding. You might have something around the elbows, around the shoulders. Maybe a slight softening in the face, around the mouth, around the eyes. Yes. And maybe there's tension associated with your thinking mind, the activity of thinking.

As you exhale, soften, relax, open the thinking mind, and then lower your attention into your torso to feel the experience of breathing, the comings and goings of inhale and exhale. Feeling the rhythm of breathing in and breathing out, and the rhythm of expansion and contraction, breathing in and breathing out. And as you're breathing, notice that you're aware of your body breathing. There's very simple cognitive moments of recognition of breathing in and breathing out. There are shifting, changing cognitions cognitive moments. And there are shifting, changing moments of sensation, sensing.

And there might be a general sense of awareness or observation. See if the sense of being aware of breathing can be like a wide open window. Big open window. The window being open completely is mostly an absence that allows the breeze to come in, light to come in, just like the openness in the window has no weight, no substance. Awareness like a window has no substance, no weight. It both is something and isn't something.

A receptivity and openness. in which what you're aware of doesn't linger, doesn't settle, where what is known and felt is almost the same, as if it has no weight, no size, the knowing of what's happening, the receptivity in the mind that knows the experience, feels the experience, That receptivity is like an open window that doesn't resist anything, does not hold on to anything. And whatever you know, know it lightly. If you know in breath as an in-breath, know it so lightly that the knowing has no weight, no substance, it's almost like a hologram. Comes and goes, nothing there to hold on to.

Being conscious of breathing is weightless in and of itself. It is empty of substance, empty of self, empty of past and future. The simplest way of being conscious is like an open window and what comes through the window is equally weightless. Weightless. in how it comes through consciousness, how it exists in consciousness. The body might feel like it has weight and substance.

The breathing might have very particular clear sensations that are felt, but being conscious of it, being conscious of the sensations, has no weight, has no substance. Stay close to the lightness of consciousness, the emptiness of it, like an open window, empty of any glass interfering with what comes through the window. As you're aware, as you're mindful of what's happening in the present, can you find your way to that, to how you're aware with ease, without any effort. If you make no effort whatsoever, how are you aware? Can there be hearing with no effort? Even with your eyes closed, can there be seeing with no effort?

Without a decision to see, can there be sensing of the body that simply happens on its own? Sensations that arise without a decision on your part, even if you are trying to do something with your awareness, what comes into awareness effortlessly, lightly, in that effortless way, the feeling of effortlessness? Does it come along with being free of weight, free of substance? Not the sensations, but the sensations, how they are known, how they appear effortlessly. Once you're aware, then you might make effort to continue being aware. Relax and look around to what arises effortlessly, what is known without effort, in the vast emptiness of the mind.

And maybe in what appears effortlessly, new sensations, new experiences, maybe very subtle. When they first appear in that effortlessness, are they empty of clinging, empty of attachment? The way in which some things appear in consciousness effortlessly can then be recruited into effortful awareness. If that's the case, relax, allow, and be ready for what next comes effortlessly. Effortless awareness that has no weight, no substance, where there's an emptiness of substantiality. And then to turn that effortless awareness, to notice what you know effortlessly is. about the people you might encounter today. How do you hold them in the same soft, empty field of consciousness? So the others don't land, don't stop, don't get caught in your awareness. They appear, they pass through.

You see others, but you don't cling. Don't get tight or contracted. and in that open space of awareness. Let your tender heart vibrate and radiate. Let the warmth of your heart flow into that awareness, flow into the space. Let your inner warmth and care include all the people you encounter.

May all beings be happy. May all beings be safe. May all beings be peaceful. May all beings be free. Thank you.