

Guided Meditation: Flowing with the Change

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Warm greetings from IMC. And so as we begin today, there is a dynamic relationship between stability and change, between constancy and inconstancy, and between a kind of inner stillness and the ability to see impermanence in a deep way. The way I understand this is that the more still and stable and settled the mind, our inner life becomes, the more it's available to see how much things change. So it's maybe a little bit a paradox, but the more that the mind is busy, caught up in its thoughts, spinning, the more there's a kind of subconscious, unconscious imputing of permanence, orienting around things should always be this way, or things are never, and some idea of permanence, idea, this is how things are. It's always be this way, or it'll always be this way for the next hour or next minute. This is how it is.

But to settle in and quiet a thinking mind, quiet the mind that jumps around and tells stories, and evaluates and projects ideas that something is there and is... The projection that something is, an experience is, ongoing in a steady way. In meditation, we start seeing that even though in a sense the broad experience of the moment is not changing, internally it's constantly shifting and changing. Every experience is dynamic, moving, shifting, changing sensations. Sensations, thoughts, feelings, emotions, impulses, motivations. And there's something that's very freeing about relaxing into that flow of change that cannot happen if we're fixated or locked in or caught in any ideas that things are ongoing.

This is the way things really are, and there's ongoing. Even if this is the way things really are in the world, certain things, what we're not talking about here is not what's really happening in the world. We're talking about what's happening deep in the realms of how we experience the world, how our inner life is participating, being with... make sense of, feels, evaluates, selects the experience we have. And that is constantly shifting. To be in harmony with that, to understand the shifting, changing nature of how we perceive, how we experience, how we know anything at all, that is freeing. But it begins by becoming stable, still.

And so it helps to be a little bit oriented around this. Not permanence, but settledness. Not fixedness, but a relaxed ability. So to assume a meditation posture, and for if you're doing this posture in, with a still body, one of the reasons, there's other ways of meditating, like walking meditation, for example. But the advantage of sitting or standing still or lying down is that it involves less mental activity. It's possible to close the eyes and simplify the activities of the present moment and become attuned or recognized ways in which the body is still, unmoving, and to take some breaths, maybe a little fuller than usual, not too much, that inserts into the posture a little bit of movement, the movements of the torso breathing, stretching of the rib cage, opening, and relaxing and settling back on the exhale.

On the exhale, relaxing shoulder, belly, letting the breathing return to normal, and appreciating, feeling your way to where in your body are you most settled? Maybe it's below, deeper, than where you feel unsettled. Orient yourself to what is settled, feeling where in the body there's stability, a stable base and breathe with that stability where there is an inner stillness. Even if there's swirls of feelings and thoughts, feel the inner stillness as you exhale, calming the thinking mind. On the exhale, relaxing the thinking mind, softening, gentling, and see if you can find in the mind or somewhere in your inner life, a place of stability. Maybe it's a little dot of a place or inner stillness where your mental life can settle.

A stillness which invites the mind to settle here. Relax. Settling into your breathing. Breathing. Movements of the body breathing, like the movements of the leaves on a tree where the trunk is solid and steady and quiet. So let your torso, deep in your torso, be still and stable and strong like a majestic tree that allows the branches and leaves to gently sway in the wind.

And as you breathe in, in the inhale, there is something that you orient yourself to, something that you recognize, that you call an inhale, some sensation, movement that signifies breathing in. Whatever signifies breathing in disappears when you exhale. And now there's something, sensation that signifies that that you're exhaling. To know you're breathing in is to have had the mind recognize, signify something as constituting breathing in. The mind-thinking mind, conceiving mind can become quieter and stiller, signifying nothing but the changing nature of sensations as you breathe in. Riding the change.

Riding the change of exhaling, but letting ideas of inhale and exhale disappear, just riding, floating on the changing nature of breathing. Even the idea of breathing is extra, resting in the changing kaleidoscope of sensations in that part of your body where you ordinarily experience breathing. Allowing awareness to flow in the direction of change, like floating in the current of a river, like gently petting a cat in the direction their hair lays down. Awareness in

harmony with the direction of change, floating, petting, just change, with no thought, no signifying change. Breath, breathing in, breathing out, just riding along with the flow of change, recognizing deep within where there is a stillness, a stability, a place that is deep in the mind, deep in the heart.

It is gently, softly, very still and calm, unmoving. Around which, beyond which, we're aware of all the shifting, changing nature of all direct experience, perception, whatever is perceived, and to perceive the changing, moving, shifting nature of what arises and passes in the mind, relaxing that part of the mind that signifies, assigns meaning, assigns concepts to what is there. Simply being aligned in harmony with the changing field of perception, of all perceptions. And then as we come to the end of this meditation, to appreciate a very light, calm, easeful way that we can invite back concepts, ideas, the signification of things, lightly, openly, almost like a dream, light cloud floating in the mind. Take into account the people in your life, around you, people you might be communicating with, or running into, neighbors and in your community, places of work.

Hold it all lightly and softly so that your ideas of them don't interfere with a kind-hearted heart, a kindness of heart, friendliness, warmth, so ideas and stories, fixed ideas, fixed stories, opinions. Don't interfere with our goodwill, well-wishing, May we live with an open, friendly heart to all beings. May all beings be happy. May all beings be safe. May all beings be peaceful. May all beings be free. And may for each of us, may our mindfulness, our awareness practice, keep us fluid and open free of conceptual fixations, always ready to be friendly. May all beings be happy. Thank you.