

## Guided Meditation: Beyond Desire

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So I offer you my delighted greetings from IMC sitting here in my meditation posture, a posture that has been phenomenally important for me for over 50 years. So it's quite something to assume a posture that as soon as I sit into it, there is some degree of stopping, a stopping of some of the momentum of the mind. And part of that momentum of the mind is having desires. We don't necessarily know, recognize how ongoing and how continuous the desire, desires operate in the functioning of the mind, the activities of the mind, the constructions of the mind, what we think about, how we think. Meditation is one of those means by which two things can happen. We slowly begin to recognize how powerful it is, the continuity, the river, the flood of desires can be, and that there is an alternative that is delightful.

It's more, it's wondrous. In a way it's more satisfying than having any desires. In fact, having desires, even ones that produce images and ideas that are delightful for the mind, desire itself has within it a degree of stress. So analogy is that, for all this what I'm saying, is there are times where I do stretching, like yoga stretches of different types. And there's a particular kinds of stretches for me where what's happening is it slowly, the muscles are relaxing, and then certain limb I have stretches or opens or continues. It's not a matter of stretching the tendons or the ligaments or exactly stretching the muscles.

It's rather to be up against where the muscles are tight and kind of gently finding ways to let that release, release, release. And slowly over time, what I'm stretching opens up and relaxes, the muscle lets go. What's fascinating is that I didn't know that those muscles were tight, being held. They're continuously held maybe in daily life. Not until I do my stretches do I realize that that's the case when they relax deeply. So same thing with the mind. We don't even know how much we're involved in desires until it begins to do something, it allows them to relax, relax, soften.

And then, wow, it's possible to have this degree of peace or calm. Another analogy is that of the classic one in Buddhism, of a monkey swinging from limb to limb in the forest. As it's swinging forward, at some point it's going to let go of the arm that's behind them, on the limb behind. But as it lets go, it's already reaching to grab the next limb. There isn't any time in which it's not grabbing. It's holding on tight, and as it lets go of one, it's already reaching forward to grab the next.

So that can also be part of our stream. We don't even know that we have a desire, and that when the desire goes, maybe it's satisfied, the mind can be already looking for the next thing to want. It's not just simply kind of an object that we want to get or a thing we want to do. There's desire that propels, motivates, even what we think about. There can be that reaching forward for the next thought, even if we don't know what thought's going to be. Because it's so habitual, the swing of grabbing and letting go, grabbing and letting go.

When we sit in meditation, it's one of those places in life, on a regular basis, that we can learn not to grab the next branch. Not because then we'll fall, but rather because then we can rest deeply. So the idea of putting to rest, resting, stopping, ceasing for a short while, all desires. Don't be afraid that you'll never have a desire again. Of course you will. After some really wonderful, good activity that was tiring, you might stop and rest and do nothing for a while, completely stop.

That doesn't mean you won't do an activity in the future, but we need pause, we need vacations, we need to stop deeply. So to assume a meditation posture, which does require a little bit of desire, desire to sit in an aligned meditative, meditating, a posture that supports meditation, until that desire is fulfilled well enough. Then you put that desire down and let the posture be what it is. Then to have a small light desire to relax the body within that posture. To have to act on that desire, you might take a few fuller breaths and relax the body as you exhale. Okay. Then feeling that's enough, the desire to breathe normally again, to let go of extra deeper breathing, an extra effort, and allow yourself to breathe in an ordinary way.

Then you might want to have a small desire to relax the mind. The image that you might try is to stay with the breathing. Maybe the breathing in the torso, the expanding and contracting, lifting and settling in the torso, like the lifting and falling of waves traveling across the ocean, and that the mind, the thinking mind, somehow rests on the top of that ocean, being lifted and settling with each passing wave and relaxing the thinking mind, as you exhale. So there is operating a little desire to relax, to soften, and then maybe having a quiet, peaceful desire to leave the mind alone now, and let the awareness settle into the torso, settling around the experience of breathing, and a desire to allow the experience of breathing, to connect you to

the present moment. So the desires to think about the future, the past, fantasizing, desire to think about other things to do, those desires are met with the desire to let those rest for now. Relaxing desires for anything but being at rest, peacefully settled, here with your breathing, noticing the momentum of desire, desiring, the force of desire within you, often found in the force behind thinking, the force of wanting, the desire to want something to go away and not be there.

Let the desires you feel, not what you're desiring, but the sensation, feeling of desire, desire being in you. Let that rest on the surface of the ocean so the waves of breathing in and out, lifting and falling of the breath calms, settles the force of desire within you. Feeling the force, momentum, pressure of desiring, wanting something or a wanting which is wanting something not to be, put aside what the concern is in favor of feeling the, experiencing the sensation, the pressure, momentum of wanting, and let it all rest on the gentle waves of breathing. The pleasant evidence that the force of desire is quieting, is abiding peacefully here and now in your body, maybe with the breathing. Whatever takes you away from that present moment, away from the peace, chances are high that there is some desire, some momentum and force of desire at play. Can you feel, sense, that within you, that in your experience, the awareness which has no desires in it?

Maybe being aware of a sound that arises spontaneously is heard without any desire for or against it. Maybe there are sensations in your body that occur and you can be aware of them and there's no desire. There's just awareness. Maybe deep inside there is a quiet, still, peaceful place where there is an awareness. There is a way of being that just is independent of any desire, a place that's desire-free. Can you adjust yourself to be in harmony with what is desire-free?

Yes, to join it, to be in the current of what has no desire. Because for the next few minutes, in the deepest, intimate place within, there is no need for desire, except for the desire to be aligned, to be going with the grain, with the current of the vast world that is free of any desires that you have. Beyond the edges of desire, to the side above, below, is a space, is an awareness, is a peace that is free of desires. Shift your devotion from desires to what is free of desires, and let go. And as we come to the end of this sitting, see if you can awaken or tap into a simple, ordinary, natural desire for a peaceful world. For a world in which all people are friends. All people have enough resources to care for each other. May all beings be happy. May all beings be safe. May all beings be peaceful. May all beings be free. And may I cherish, may each of us cherish the desire that wants the best for everyone. Thank you.