

Guided Meditation: The Source of Thinking

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So, warm greetings. I'm delighted to be here, having just come back from teaching a retreat at our retreat center in Santa Cruz. And so, still very much, very much appreciating the chance to be in this meditation hall, to be sitting in this posture, to be with you all, to share the Dharma, to share this practice. Thank you.

So, what are the characteristics of human beings, if I can be so bold as to say something grand like this, is that human beings are often involved with thinking, and that involvement sometimes is preoccupation. Sometimes it involves being lost in their thoughts. Sometimes it involves being addicted or preoccupied with thinking. And it's possible to do mindfulness of thinking. And that's really a very significant way of practicing mindfulness.

But there's another thing that we can do. Rather than focusing on what we're thinking about, rather than being preoccupied by the subjects, no matter how important, no matter how important the people are that we're thinking about, the concerns we have, could be very real and very important to be thinking that way, thinking about these things. But still, there is another option, which I like to describe as going to the source of thinking, going and finding where it begins, where it arises, where it comes from deep inside of us. The source. And that's invaluable too. To whatever degree, every way, thinking is valuable, the source is valuable. To whatever degree, thinking is problematic, going to the source is medicine, is a corrective.

Different people find different places they identify as a source within. But I would like to suggest for now that the source is not in the head. It's below the neck, somewhere in the torso. Some people might identify it with the heart area, but there's a long tradition in Buddhism to see the source as being even lower than the heart in the belly. In the general wide area of the belly, below the diaphragm, above the pelvic floor, that can be a stable base, provide a strong

foundation for everything in us that's above it. The physical body, our emotional body, and even our thinking, the thinking mind, it can all kind of rest and grow out of the source, deep in this kind of belly area.

It might not seem like much of a source for thinking. It might seem to be almost maybe even a betrayal of thoughts, something as basic as the sensations in your belly area. It might even seem kind of very disconnected from what's most important for you. But to have this belly area be soft and relaxed, there's so much that goes on there, so much intelligence, so much source of emotions, so much source of empathy, and to allow the life, the lived life, to flow out of the stability in your lower torso.

So gently closing the eyes, and entering into the sensations of your body, letting your attention settle into the area of your belly, your lower torso, all the way down to your, if you're sitting upright, to the sitting bones, to the contact with your cushion, your chair, your bed, the floor. To feel whatever degree of stability, maybe firm support, that is created in the meeting of your weight, body weight, and the surface that holds you from the pull of gravity, the place where your weight rests. And then sitting, feeling that support, to relax your belly, soften, if you're able to have a posture that doesn't constrict your belly, that lets it be more open, lets the belly expand, relax. And feeling the weight of your upper torso somehow giving substance, giving support by your lower torso, your belly area, your belly, sides of your waist, your lower back.

Feeling the expansion of the lower belly as you breathe in. The exhale is directed by the diaphragm. That's where the work is. Allow the lower torso, the belly, to gently, relaxedly follow, move in the wake of the diaphragm. Lower belly just follows along and feeling the stability, maybe a degree of steadiness in your lower torso. Maybe a degree of softness, relaxation, in addition to any tension that's held there.

Relaxing the thinking mind. As you exhale, soften the thinking mind. As if a thinking mind can drop down and rest in the torso. It has a support. It has a soft cushion bed it can rest in. It has a soft, where the soft support of the belly, the lower torso, is the source of thinking.

We're deep in the belly. We can feel what is there before we have a thought. The silent softness, tenderness, the silent stability and steadiness, deep in the torso. And follow, accompany the sensations of breathing. Not with your thinking mind, not from your head, but from your belly. The ability of the body to sense sensations. Stay there as if sensations deep in the torso is the source of thinking.

And as we come to the end of this sitting, to feel whatever stability there is in your lower torso

and sitting bones. And to feel the stability, steadiness, maybe the stillness that's deep in your torso. That it's the source of empathy, of care. It's a source for love that's deeper than the heart, quieter, broader, more open than the heart can ever be. And from this deep source within, to feel connected to the whole world, to feel part of this whole world, to be this whole world.

And from this deep source, deeper than ideas of self, deeper than your roles, deeper than all your past and all your possible futures. The deep source which is always ready to see the world in a new way, experience the world with new sensitivity, with an intimacy and orientation to care for the whole world. Wishing everyone well as we wish ourselves well. To wish ourselves well as we wish the whole world well. The deep source within is not interested in the news. It's not interested in what could be or could have been. It's there just to care, just right now, simply holy.

May all beings be happy. May all beings be safe. May all beings be peaceful. May all beings be free. And may we live from the deep place within, with care and respect for everyone we encounter. May all beings be happy. Thank you.