

Guided Meditation: Allowing Breathing

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So good morning, everyone, and welcome. And I'm having a little bit of trouble with technology, so all the monitors that are supposed to work here. And so maybe we'll... let it be. So, today the subject will be meditation on breathing, mindfulness of breathing. Now I've spent 50 years of my life, more now, meditating on the breathing. And it's been a central feature of my life.

And I kind of have loved it. I mean, as with any relationship, it's had its ups and downs. But, you know, I think we've been committed to each other, the breath and me, and finding our way together. And one of the things I love about paying attention to breathing is breathing sits at the nexus, sits at the center of just about everything having to do with our life. It's, and it's a wonderful place to be, to be centered yourself, myself, from which there's a relationship to psychology, emotions, activity, relationship to other people. All kinds of things come into play around the breathing because of all the ways that breathing has to adjust in order to be responsive to the needs of body, mind, and heart.

And so it's kind of, for me, a truth teller. I sit down to meditate. And by noticing how I'm breathing, I notice something about how I am. But by breathing mindfully, breathing with awareness, it changes the dynamic. There's almost like I have two forms of breathing. The breathing that happens on its own, without any attention, and the breathing that happens with awareness.

And awareness makes all the difference. Then breathing becomes a, joins a very powerful, very significant feedback loop where mindfulness of breathing begins to change the breathing, begins to relax the breathing, where it's held, begins to quiet the breathing, begins to harmonize the breathing, just being aware of it. Not always, but sometimes. And breathing

then, because it's so connected to moods and emotions and how I am, the rhythm of breathing is kind of like a massage for it. It begins to settle things, harmonize things psychologically, emotionally, physically, in many ways.

So to begin, assuming a posture and a meditation... and sitting a little bit more upright than usual, or if you're lying down, adjusting your back, how you are. So there's a little bit more kind of space or room for the rib cage, for the diaphragm, to breathe without restriction. And then to gently close your eyes and to feel... to discover how is your breathing now, as if you're allowed to breathe the way you are, but you're kind of like with a friend, and you're just kind of checking in with your friend. How are you? What is being carried in breathing?

What is being expressed? How's the rhythm of breathing in relationship to the rest of you? And then gently taking a few long, slow, deep breaths. Okay. And do so in a kind of way that feels relaxing for you. And to relax on the exhale, relaxing the whole torso, belly, chest, shoulders, and then letting your breathing return to normal.

And as if you're watching something, a natural event in the natural world, it's something that's interesting, watching the river or the ocean waves or watching deer in a meadow. To settle back, to watch and feel the experience of breathing. As if you're going to accompany breathing. Be a good friend for your breathing. To know it better, not to change it, not to fix it. But it's to meet the very center of your life.

Everything centers around breathing one way or the other. And by attending to your breathing, you are indirectly attending to everything. For these minutes, no need to attend to other issues, stories, events, emotions. Trust attending to breathing, the rhythm of breathing in and breathing out, one breath at a time. To allow for receptivity to the experience of breathing, that you're on the receiving side of a natural process that has been continuing since you were born. Allow yourself to be on the receiving side of mindful breathing, aware of breathing.

Letting go of thoughts, quieting the mind. If you can feel the silence or the stillness or the spaciousness that's around you, within you, and feel the breathing within the silence, stillness, spaciousness, as if breathing is the most important thing. And as we come to the end of this sitting, do calmly, carefully, feel how your body is breathing now. Gently feel, sense, watch. The movements are breathing in and breathing out. Maybe even the subtle sensations at play as you breathe.

Sensations that rise and pass in a rhythm. In taking a few breaths, deeper breaths, to experience your body more fully, where the expansion of the rib cage, the belly, moves you into

a more fuller connection to your body. In a longer exhale, a time to relax more, settle, and then to imagine that you're, as you breathe in, the expansion of the rib cage, the belly, that your awareness rides it out into the world, as if the awareness that radiates spreads from you, through your imagination, through your sense of the wider world, that it can carry your goodwill, carry your well-wishing and care for the world. And as you end this sitting, gently repeat these words that I say, to see... if they resonate with something that's been touched through this meditation. May all beings be happy. May all beings be safe.

May all beings be peaceful. May all beings be free. And on this day, may I contribute to that possibility, even in the smallest ways. Thank you.