

## Guided Meditation: Easeful Breathing, Easeful Life

**Gil Fronsdal**

**December 22, 2025**

**Keywords:** Pāṇātipātā, five precepts, mindfulness, concentration, Buddhist ethics, meditation posture, reassurance, easeful breath, life-sustaining activity, attachment

---

So hello everyone and welcome. And may the beginning of this new solar year bring you lots of satisfying meditation. Hello everyone and welcome. So may the return of the light be the filling of your heart with light.

So... One of the things that I really value, that I enjoy doing, is making a strong connection between the Buddhist practice of mindfulness and concentration and the Buddhist approach to ethics, to living a wholesome life. And one way to make that connection is that mindfulness, in a way I like to teach it, is centered on breathing. And Buddhist ethics, in a sense, part of it, one way of seeing the beginning of it, is the first of the five precepts. The first of the five precepts is to refrain from killing breathing beings. *Pāṇātipātā* means breathing beings, living beings that breathe.

And... And so, as we tune into breath and meditation, how do we do it, in a sense, kind of ethically, wholesomely, to not harm anything, to not harm ourselves in that process? And there's very thorough care, love, attention to detail, in the breathing we do to see how to... not harm ourselves with the breathing, or how to find how to breathe in the most harmless way, peaceful way. And the way to do that is to appreciate that it's possible to leave the breath alone and not interfere with it. Just follow it. Just allow it. Just feel it from the inside out, riding the breath.

And as we do, we'll begin recognizing how the different states of mind we have, different states of emotions we have, affects the breathing. And we'll discover, in fact, that breathing is sometimes held, sometimes tight, sometimes shallow, sometimes with feeling of being uncomfortable and not quite free. But to know about a free breath... The breath that feels deeply reassured. The Pāli word for reassurance, assurance, literally means to breathe easily, to allow breathing to breathe itself. And we, following along, staying close, intimate, caring,

not interfering, not pushing, not straining, not breathing hard, to try to get some kind of special meditative state, to be at ease in our breathing.

So to assume a meditation posture, giving some care to having a posture that leaves the front of the torso uncollapsed, uncontracted, so that there's room for breathing to expand and contract peacefully, openly, maybe with a chest a little bit more open than usual, sometimes pulling up the back of the head, straightening out the spine, gently closing the eyes, and to appreciate breathing more fully, to become more familiar and prepared to follow along with breathing, to take a few fuller breaths, feeling how the rib cage expands and a little longer exhale than usual so that something in your body has a chance to relax off in the shoulders and then to let your breathing return to normal and feel your breathing in your torso. Feel it to see, is there any ways in which it's held in check? Any places where it feels held or... And if so, be at ease with that and see the rhythm of breathing to be a gentle massage that touches where breathing might be. Difficult and easeful massage. Rhythm in the rhythm, breathing in and breathing out.

Resting the attention with breathing. Allowing breathing to breathe itself and awareness follows along peacefully without judgment or interfering. And you might notice that if you wander off in thought, if you have some big concern, it might affect how you breathe. Certain parts of the areas of breathing tighten up, speed up. Keep returning to the breathing. Focusing on that part of breathing that feels easeful, light, simple, more than focusing on any way that breathing is difficult.

Look for that part of breathing, the rhythm cycles of breathing that feel ease, easeful, maybe effortless, light, soft, stay close to where breathing feels easeful, where the movements of breathing... are not labored. And as we come to the end of the sitting, to gently feel your body, whatever sensations of breathing are easy, easeful, as if for those sensations don't seem to be directly tied to your effort, your will, in a sense, what follows in the gentle rhythm of breathing in and breathing out. And for whatever part of breathing that is easy, easeful, whatever part of breathing that seems to breathe itself, how can that be a reference point for not being caught up in thoughts, ideas, stories, events? How can that keep you calm and peaceful, present in a kind way? One answer is that to get caught in anything sometimes brings an end to the easeful breath, certainly brings an end to our caring connection to how this life-sustaining activity supports us in the rhythm of breathing in and breathing out.

And maybe, just maybe, it's not necessary to sacrifice an easeful breath for almost anything we do in our daily life. Maybe we can do things better when we don't harm, limit the way that we breathe. May it be that we breathe easefully with a free breath, an unconstrained breath,

so that we can support others to also breathe. Breathe easily, freely, without constraint. May it be that what we learn through meditation can spread the goodness of this practice out into the world.

May our ability to stay mindful of breathing help us to be in this world without attachment and clinging and resistance and fear. May all beings be happy. May all beings be safe. May all beings be peaceful. May all beings be free. And if we stay close to that, maybe our breathing will be nourishing. Thank you.