

Guided Meditation: Staying True

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Hello and warm greetings. I hope all of you are well in this winter weather that some of us are having. And for these holidays that are celebrated, I wish you all happy celebrations and this beginning of turning towards light, that it happens now in these days. May the greater and greater light of the day translate to greater and later light of the Dharma and your heart. May your heart light up and fill you.

So today the focus is on a little bit more with mindfulness of thinking, and mindfulness thinking is a valid and wonderful subject for careful attention, but not to think more. In some people, the idea of attention, mindfulness, is actually called thinkfulness. They just think about things more. And what we're doing in mindfulness ceremony, bodyfulness practice, is not so much thinking about thought, but having closer to a silent awareness of the event of thinking, kind of like you're listening to someone who speaks a language you don't know. So you have no idea what they're saying, but because you don't know, you become more attuned to the emotional quality of the voice being spoken, the speed in which it's being spoken, the energy, the loudness or softness, the forcefulness or the ease and relaxation in the voice. There's all these other aspects that we tune into.

And that's kind of what we do with mindfulness. There's a time and place to be mindful of content, but for now it's more useful to be aware of the overall process activity without concern about the content. Because what we want to do is to discover an awareness and attention that doesn't get hijacked by thoughts, doesn't get pulled into their allure, their promise, their authority. And more importantly, maybe, is how involvement with thoughts disconnects us to the fullness, the wholeness of our experience. Many people spend much of their days in their thoughts. And one way to do it is to be on a screen all day.

And that's really kind of in this cognitive world, this world of mental processing. That's very limiting, limited and limiting. And to begin to appreciate, if you get caught involved

in thoughts while meditating, don't be in a hurry to let go of it. But take time to know the effect it has on you, especially how it maybe has disconnected you from your embodied experience, maybe your emotional experience. Maybe your full experience disconnects you from an awareness which is peaceful and calm, that has the overview, has the bigger picture of it all without being caught in anything.

So to assume a meditation posture, that's a balance between being alert and relaxed. And to gently close your eyes and to notice something about the activity of your thinking mind. How much energy there is there, how activated it is. Is there any tension or discomfort? Is there any sense of insistence to have these thoughts? Is your thinking mind calm, settled, more at ease than it was maybe yesterday, or more activated with the excitement of the day.

Is a thinking mind tired and weary? Is it refreshed and eager to think? And what's the physical experience? What effect does your thinking have on your body? Are there any sensations that come with your thinking? Any part of your body that's activated with tension or energy.

And then as if you're kind of gently approaching a cat, slowly, calmly, as you inhale, gently bring your awareness to gently touch the thinking mind. Gently approach it to feel it, to know it, in a gentle way. And let the exhale be a kind of gentle massaging of relaxing the thinking mind. So not being too assertive and not being too forceful, but very gently, softly, on the inhale, come close to the thinking mind, relax it as you exhale. Sometimes instead of relaxing a thinking mind, on the exhale open up the thinking mind, make space for it to expand, and like a gas that expands outwards, becomes thinner and disappears.

On the exhale, let that thinking mind and its thoughts float away. And then as if it's best to leave the cat alone, let your attention now shift to, in the same way, a gentle, calm attention to the body breathing. As you exhale, a relaxing and settling of the body into the breathing body. The torso where the breathing is, all the way to the belly. With the inhale, a gentle growing of awareness through the torso. On the exhale, a settling, steadying of the mind of awareness here and now.

And if your mind gets involved in thinking, when you notice it, try doing this. Try on the inhale to gently approach the thinking mind, to feel it, to touch it, to know what it's like for your body and mind to be thinking. What you're thinking about is not so important, just the experience of thinking. Approach it on the inhale and let it relax or open or soften. And then, on the exhale. Do that three or four times, and then return to mindfulness of breathing.

If you find yourself thinking, notice the effect thinking has on you. Notice what you lose in being absorbed in thinking. And notice if what you're thinking about has nothing to do with

here and now, your direct experience. And if that's the case, in a certain kind of way your thoughts are not exactly about real things. It's about the imagination, memory, how you construct and tell stories about things. What is most real, actual, immediate is here and now in your body.

The processes of breathing and living, and that being involved in thought too much, you lose that connection to the living present. And as we come to the end of this sitting, to check in with your thinking mind, how is it different now than at the beginning? What are the, what different sensations are there? What different degrees of comfort or discomfort is there? How strong is the pull of thoughts? How loud is your thoughts?

And for a few moments, appreciate your thinking mind. It's been with you for a long time and supported you and guided you through all kinds of important life situations. It might have made some mistakes for you, challenged you too. But for this day, to appreciate your thinking mind, to have gratitude for its important role in your life, not to see it as an enemy or a problem, but as a partner, not to see it as the authority, the center of all things, but as a partner with the whole of who you are, to living a whole life, all of ourselves included. And with all of who we are, may we wish this world well, may we wish happiness and well-being, joy and peace, may all beings be happy, may all beings be safe. May all beings be peaceful. May all beings be free. Thank you.