

Guided Meditation: Prevading the Well-Being

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Welcome to our meditation session. And to begin with a ritual of posture, maybe with a homecoming of posture, maybe with the attention on posture, being an expression of care, care for your body, care for yourself. And so assuming a supportive posture for meditation, giving yourself a little bit of time to make the even subtle adjustments in how your hands are, your arms, your legs, your feet, subtle adjustments to the, maybe even the back of the neck. There is a kind of up alertness or a wakefulness that can happen in the back of the neck as the neck elongates a little bit or comes back a teeny bit with a little bit more space created between the last vertebrae and the skull, reorienting oneself from concerns that have nothing to do with here and now to a ritual of settling into here and now, gently closing the eyes. Yes. And gently, pausing at the end of the exhale, just momentary to feel the body's urge, the physical urge, maybe a very gentle, calm urge to breathe in, and give in to that, and ride the inhale.

Let the inhale, the movement and expansions of the chest, the belly, let it touch you from the inside out. To the degree to which air fills your lungs as you breathe in, let that feeling of becoming gently full and expansive appear for you fully as you breathe in, and as you exhale to relax your body, to soften. Breathing in and becoming aware of the thinking mind, not what you're thinking about, but the sensations and feelings embedded in that thinking mind. As you exhale, soften, relax the thinking mind. If thinking are like waves on the surface of water, let the winds die down in the mind, a quieting of your thoughts, and the softening on the exhale, a stilling of the waves, as the surface of the water spreads wide, calm. The mind becomes expansive and calm, and then centering yourself on breathing, as if perhaps breathing is a refuge.

Breathing is a place that protects you from the winds of the mind, the storms of the mind, breathing maybe almost like the calm in the middle of all things, and as you accompany your

breathing, as you become one with your breathing. Is there any well-being, any pleasure, delight, any joy or happiness, however modest it might be, that somehow is associated with this meditation, and let that become the gentle wind or the gentle absorption, and of water, like water is absorbed in a sponge. Let that well-being slowly spread and get absorbed throughout your body, not so much trying too much. Just gently, breathing, breathing with the well-being, where the rhythm of breathing in and breathing out, connecting to breathing, sustaining attention, is a gentle massage, wind, water, that spreads into your body, expanding field of well-being to which gives you a kind of attitude of yes, yes to being present here. Feeling whatever well-being is present. For a few minutes, put aside any resistance to feeling well-being.

Take the risk to feel some degree of well-being. So well-being accompanies you, your practice. And if there are some ways that you feel challenged, emotionally or physically or socially, if that challenge seems to be standing in the way of well-being, let them accompany each other, like the two flat hand palms come together in *añjali*, in bowing. And if it supports your well-being and joy, have a little half-smile in your lips, your mouth, letting well-being and joy. Be massage, be worked into everything, your whole being gently, slowly.

And then as we come to the end of the sitting, some care. Self-care goes into the end of meditation. Just as there's care in going into it, it might first begin by a gentle recognition of what is going well for you through the meditation. And that could be a very modest criteria of what's going well. Maybe you're a little more settled. Maybe there's more self-awareness, some understanding of yourself.

Maybe there's more calm. Maybe there is some form of meditative well-being. And whatever benefit that has come, let it register in your body, in your heart, in your mind. Take it in. Some people use the metaphor, drinking. Drink it in or taste it with your whole being.

When there's something good that's happened in the *Dhamma*, it's invaluable to appreciate it, without appropriating it, without holding onto it or appropriating it to build up another form of self. Just appreciate. And that appreciation, that benefit of the well-being, can expand and grow. If we open ourselves up in a way to share it with all beings, almost like we're going to give it away. Let everyone else share or receive my calm. I'm not going to hold on to it.

I'm not going to cling to it. Please, let it spread for me out into the world as a gift. May this calm, well-being, insight, understanding, be shared for the welfare and happiness of everyone. May all beings be happy. May all beings be safe. May all beings be peaceful. May all beings be free. Thank you.