

Guided Meditation: Aware with Love

Gil Fronsdal

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So, good morning and welcome to this meditation. I'd like to begin today with a quote from the *Dhammapada*, one of the more famous quotes in Buddhism. I hope it's one of the more famous ones. Hate is never overcome by hate. By love alone is hate overcome. This is the ancient truth.

And so this call on love, in contrast to hate, this is one of the fundamentally important issues for humanity to address. In our kind of human nature, or our human natures, all the different ways that we are as humans, one of the capacities we have is to hate. And one of the capacities we have is to love. And often those two are set in opposition, but maybe the deeper form of love doesn't oppose them, but is able to hold them all in a wise, wise way. And that is the deepest love.

So when we sit and practice mindfulness, there's an opportunity here to meet ourselves, meet the world, to kind of be alive with a very different focus than what we're raised to do and understood to do. And I offer it this way, that rather than changing what you see in the world, in mindfulness practice, we focus on how we see. Rather than focusing on what we know, it's how we know. Rather than focusing on what we feel and what our emotions are, it's how we feel, how we feel our emotions. This how we take in the world, how we know anything at all, the how we are.

And to begin to appreciate that so that sometimes when people hate and love, it has a lot to do with the object of each. And we're trying to justify, we don't put hate because it's, of course, we should hate something. Or justify love. Of course we should justify that thing. But maybe as important as that kind of reflection can be at times, when we do mindfulness practice, we're having a whole different approach. There's a kind of a paradigm shift.

And so as we turn into the how we are, how we're aware, how we know, and not just loving, but how we love, not just hate, but how we hate. What's the how like? And then we get a whole other set of information about ourselves by the how. And this is a source of profound wisdom, the how we are. And what we begin to discover is that there are layers of how we are. There are surface layers that have a lot to do with reactivity.

And there's deeper layers that have to do with the emergent generative qualities of human life, of just being alive. And so the contrast between love and hate could also be said to be between ill will and goodwill. And this idea of willing, where does the idea of the will of life, just the will to survive is such a deep instinct in human beings, as is the will to care, the will to nurture, the will to love in a deep nurturing way, where the how we are is nurturing. The how we are is from this deeper generative place that is not about survival. It's deeper than that.

To survive, we engage the muscles. We engage sometimes greed and hatred. To nourish life, to nurture it, we involve in something deeper, the how. There's a willingness, there's a will, there's a movement of the goodwill, a goodwill motivation. And how we find that deeper one is in the how. How we're mindful.

That opens the door to begin discovering what's depth within us. So to assume a meditation posture, and part of this emphasis on posture is for each person to find a posture that's right for you, that begins giving you a fuller, deeper contact with your full humanity, your deeper humanity, with a degree of confidence, with a degree of being here, taking us with all of who you are in a confident, clear way. So there's room for what's the deeper movements of nurturing, caring to be present, and gently closing your eyes. One of the reasons to close our eyes in meditation is to shift our focus from what we see, what we're looking at, to beginning to feel how we are, how we see, how we know, how we're engaged in life at this moment, and to feel, to sense the physicality of that how we are now, shifting our attention from objects of sight to the emergent sensations of the body that tell us how we are.

And then to gently take a few long, slow, deep breaths, relaxing on the exhale. Sometimes exhaling longer than you would normally might allow for further relaxing the shoulders, relaxing the belly, and letting your breathing return to normal. And as you inhale, feel and sense different parts of your body so that on the exhale you can soften that part. Maybe starting with the face, relaxing the face, softening the shoulders, feeling the chest, the area of the heart, and then relaxing there. And then finally the belly, and then to do the same for the mind, the thinking mind.

As you inhale, feel, sense your thinking mind. Being okay, letting it be the way it is as you

breathe in. And then as you exhale, to relax and soften the thinking mind. And then to let all things be, and in the middle of it all, to become aware of how sensations of breathing appear in your body, in your belly or chest, or maybe in the nostrils, in the way that you might let the thinking mind be quiet. If you listen to a faint sound of a bird in the distance, let your inner life become quieter.

So there's more space in the awareness to feel and sense the body breathing. Riding the waves of sensations of breathing in and breathing out. Staying connected to the experience of breathing, letting the body reveal sensations of breathing as you sit here. But become aware of how you're aware. Notice how you're with your breathing. And can you become aware calmly, calm knowing in breath as an in-breath?

Exhale is exhale. A calm sensing the sensations of breathing. So that as much as you're aware of breathing, you also know how you're aware. And if the how you know breathing, how you're aware, has a depth within you, as a source deep within, might that source, that way of that how to know, how to sense, may there be a tenderness, a gentleness, a softness there. Might there be some warmth or love at the source of awareness, the source of where mindfulness arises from as you're aware of breathing.

Not a love or warmth that is dependent on breathing, but a warmth and nurturing that just is, maybe without a reason. And with the comings and goings of inhale and exhale, like waves, there's also the waves of gentle, sweet mindfulness, awareness that has within it some quality of love or care, goodwill, that's not dependent on where that goodwill is directed. And without trying too much, might there awareness of whatever is going on be a warm-hearted awareness? Might it contain within it love, care, kindness? That has nothing to do with having a reason or being in love with what you're focusing on.

But it's deeper, doesn't need a reason. A warm-hearted awareness that is satisfying in itself, where it's satisfying and meaningful to include all things within it, including the parts of ourselves that might be difficult. A warm-heartedness that includes and holds our ill-will, our fear. And as we come to the end of this sitting, to allow whatever warm-heartedness you have, to be released out into the world, to imagine that your heart, your love opens to spread its goodness out into the world, that with your imagination your goodwill travels across the land, out beyond the spot you're sitting, into the neighborhoods and communities and across the land, as if you can gently greet all people with kindness, love, care, letting them know that they're seen and known and appreciated.

And then there's someone who cares, and that's you. May all beings be happy. May all beings be safe. May all beings live at peace. May all beings be free of suffering, oppression, war, and

poverty. And may each of us, in the way that's right for us, no matter how small, contribute to the happiness, safety, peace, and freedom of others. May all beings be happy. Thank you.