

Guided Meditation: Natural Awareness and Love

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So hello and welcome to this meditation.

And meditation, when we're doing mindfulness practice, the distinction between the experiences which we have with inside of us and the experience that we're having that have to do with that's outside of us, there's no sharp line. They're all included. If we sit and meditate with the eyes closed and kind of center ourselves on the breathing, it is a kind of internal kind of centering of ourselves. But as the practice develops and expands, present moment awareness starts including the world around us as well. And at some point there's no difference between the two from the point of view of this non-identifying, non-reactive awareness that just is able, has a capacity to hold it all, maybe in a big mind or big awareness.

And so love is the same way, that love, there can be love that's just all internal, but there's love that's often connected to what's external to us. But the more the love expands, the more the difference when inside and outside dissolves. Not a few people will go into nature for a walk, a city park with nice trees, and maybe seeing a lovely animal, a deer, or squirrels, or maybe in a park seeing the children play. And there can be kind of a delight, and maybe even a kind of love of sorts, a warmth, a kind regard that something inside of ourselves softens. As we, you know, might describe that there's a love for the natural world that we have. And it can be inspiring and kind of reset us, remind us of how to be at ease and not caught up in the activities of the social world.

But as we turn the attention inward, that too is a natural world. Everything we have within us is nature. Everything, every thought, every feeling, sensation, every emotion can be seen as just another passing aspect-changing dimension of the natural world as it's experienced in this body and mind. And so this inner and outer begins to, the line between it begins to dissolve, and the love that we have and delight and inspiration we might have in the natural world can be found in the inner world equally. And that is radically different than how

many people live where there's a very strong identification with their thoughts, their emotions, their desires, their wishes, their condition, their situation. And sometimes it's quite negative, viewing ourselves, being with ourselves.

But sometimes it's quite compelling and we're caught in the grip of things. But there's a whole different way when inner and outer become more or less the same. They're all nature. And we can see the inner world, not as so personal, but certainly something that we're intimate with, but to view it with this non-identifying awareness where there's a delight, there's a room for love, this too is nature, no different than the world around us. And if we see there's a difference, if we prioritize or get locked in to what seems so excessively personal, that too is nature. That too is the way we're trying to survive or trying to understand. Deep, deep natural drives, natural needs are operating. And as the mindfulness deepens and deepens, this line between the inner and outer world dissolves. And love can go in all directions, can be for all that's within us, all that's without us, without needing to be justified. It's just a way of living in the middle of this natural world, appreciating its unfolding.

So to assume a meditation posture, which is taking this very natural phenomena of our body and arranging it in a way that allows for this natural vitality, natural alertness, natural ability to relax, to be maximized, to be most aligned for the purposes of waking up, gently closing the eyes and gently taking some fuller breaths. Softening into the body as you exhale, allowing the body, allowing the breathing to return to normal. And in a soft way, slow, gentle way, allow yourself to become familiar with how the natural sensations of the body show themselves to you, not fixating on any one place, but letting the attention roam around, float around the body, not thinking about what you're feeling except to think about feeling it better, allowing yourself to settle into the sensations of the body, the warmth, the tingling or humming of the body.

And then also gently, softly roam around the thinking mind, the sensations associated with the thinking, imagining, reacting mind, maybe the mind where there's a strong sense of self, me operating. And to feel the sensations of it all, the sensations of the mind softly. And as you exhale, softening the thinking mind. And then settling down into your torso. And similarly, with a soft attention, gently roam around the areas of your torso where breathing is experienced. In the chest, the belly, the shoulders, the side rib cage, maybe even the shifting pressure or weight on your sitting bones as you breathe, where the emphasis is a slow, gentle, floating around on the different sensations of breathing.

Noticing if there's any place in the breathing, in the body where breathing is pleasant, there's a pleasure or enjoyment in some part of the cycle of breathing in and out, in some place in

the body where there's a sweetness or pleasure in breathing. Relaxing the thinking mind, letting go of your thoughts, so you can let go into the experience of the body breathing. And if there is any warmth or tenderness, a sweet humming with the breathing, with the body, take that in as a support for the mind to be reassured, feel safe, and to relax. Remembering that what you're experiencing within, your breathing, sensations of your body, your emotions and moods, they are nature. Emotions and moods are like the weather. Thoughts are like the clouds, they're drifting by. The body is like the earth, the ground. Sensations are an expression of life. To feel sensations is to be alive.

And people and animals have been feeling sensations like you are. Since ancient times, we are sharing in the experience of being alive that people have been doing for centuries, millennium, and in the middle of it all, drop in the word love. The word love evokes a family of warm-hearted emotions. Drop in the word love for this natural world of your own body and mind and heart. It's all nature, so that your awareness of it is infused with love, with warmth. Whatever might be there, the good, the bad, the ugly, love can hold it all. It's all nature. Maybe without even being sure what it is, in the middle of all things, like you're dropping into a pond, drop the word love, the love that infuses awareness of all things with no inside, different than outside. Just love for all things, just aware of all things.

And as we come to the end of this sitting, to imagine you're dropping the word love into this middle of our societies, middle of our communities, and that this word, this concept, this love of yours can spread throughout your world, carrying your goodwill for everyone. May all beings be happy, may all beings be safe, may all beings be peaceful, may all beings be free. Thank you.