

Daylong Sit 2

Gil Fronsdal

March 14, 2026

Keywords: mindfulness, meditation, breathing, calm, pleasure, contentment, stillness, sensual pleasure, knowing, sensing

So welcome back, everyone, for this next sitting and this emphasis that there are two primary attentional faculties that mindfulness uses. One is knowing, and the other is sensing. The physical experience that we have is a deep feeling. As practice unfolds over a retreat, over a sitting, over a lifetime, there are different phases we go through where sometimes the feeling, the sensing, becomes predominant, and sometimes the knowing becomes predominant. And so knowing how to move between them as these different phases of practice unfold is part of the art of meditation, of mindfulness meditation.

And when to relax, when to have emphasized a calming. And there comes a time when you just don't want to keep emphasizing relaxing or calming. It can put you to sleep. It could make you too dull. But there's a time when you actually feel the tension that calming, relaxing can be quite beneficial in, if you can use it as a way of coming into the present moment more fully, with more of yourself.

Sometimes it's possible to relax and to calm. And it's kind of an effort to soothe oneself and kind of almost like giving away your attention because you're just trying to do nothing or something. So one of the ways to allow for the relaxing, whether it's something you do or something that happens naturally on its own, is as there's some movement of relaxing or calming, to know it, but more importantly, to sense it, to sense the experience of calm or relaxation, where it is, how it is. And what's the influence of calm on you? If you feel somewhat calm and you see it, it doesn't have to be dramatic, and you allow yourself to feel it, what influence does it have on you?

Does it spread some goodness? Does it spread some sweetness? Does it spread the calm itself? Does it help you become more sensitive to more subtle sensations in your body, maybe more subtle sensations with breathing? So there's a way in which the calming opens up to a deeper capacity to sense and then to know.

So with that as an introduction, and if what I'm saying doesn't make sense for you, it doesn't seem right for you, you're welcome to ignore it. But to begin with that as an orientation, assume your meditation posture, and if it's comfortable for you, gently close your eyes. And without making much effort, just almost like you're allowing yourself to do so, allow some fuller breaths, maybe allowing the exhale to extend a bit. That might naturally lead to a fuller inhale. And if it feels easy and nice, is there a way for this extended exhale and inhale to allow it to go a little slower than it actually is, and for a little bit longer, an extended exhale, inhale, slower than usual?

Does the effort to do this make you more connected to your breathing? Do you feel more of it, sense more of it? And if you do, as you exhale, let your breathing return to normal and settle into the sensations of breathing, maybe a little like breathing is offering a massage from the inside out to your body. Maybe the rhythm and alternation of breathing in and out can also be used to somehow breathe into your thinking mind, healing it on the inhale, relaxing it on the exhale, and then to center yourself on the breathing more fully.

And as you exhale, see if you can soften or relax any way that there's pressure or tension in how you're meditating. Staying close to the sensations of breathing, see if you can attune yourself to the subtle sensations that are also there in breathing. Maybe the subtle sensations beyond the edges of breathing itself. In a gentle, soft way, as you exhale, let there be a quieting of the mind so that you can better sense the body's experience of breathing.

And if, as you sense the body's experience of breathing, there is pleasure, allow yourself to absorb, take in, the pleasure of breathing. Maybe allowing yourself to feel the subtler pleasures that might come with breathing, or might be there in some kind of stillness that's right next to the breathing. Might there be some subtle pleasure, pleasantness, associated with sitting and meditation, in breathing, in part of the breathing, next to the breathing, in the body, or in the mind? Allow yourself to take in that pleasure as a way to become calmer or even more sensitive.

So I'll say a few words, and then we'll pause for a few moments. And those of you who'd like to stay for a little Q&A, I probably don't have time for everyone. Sure, I don't have time for everyone, but maybe I'll have time for three or four questions, and you're welcome to stay and listen. And then I'll carry on to this theme I'm doing at the next sitting.

But for now, I want to say that there is a skillful use of pleasure in meditation. Some people are overly addicted to pleasure. They're trying to have it, expect it, and can tie themselves in knots when they meditate. But we don't have to be afraid of pleasure. And in fact, the skillful use of it is considered beneficial and an important part of this deepening of mindfulness

practice.

And some of that has to do with how we approach pleasure, and not expecting it, not demanding it, but somehow being available to feel it as part of the field of what we're aware of. And there might be pain, there might be things which are uncomfortable, but there's a way that sometimes we over-prioritize that. There's a kind of negativity bias sometimes, or fear bias, that makes us preoccupied with what is uncomfortable. We don't want to ignore it. It can be part of mindfulness for sure, an important part of it.

But there is a skillful use of pleasure, in particular the kind of pleasure that is not sensual pleasure. It's not the pleasure that comes from our senses being stimulated, but is maybe more closely connected to a kind of contentment or a kind of calm or stillness, or a kind of easeful, relaxed way of being present, being mindful, and being with our experience. So exactly how we experience this meditative pleasure is different for each person. But for now, I just want to say that we're allowed to do that.

And it's easier for the mind to want to stay present for experience if there's pleasure there or something pleasant. If it's only unpleasant, then it's kind of natural for the mind to go someplace else. And it's harder to keep it on track. So the skillful use of pleasure is one of the themes here.