

Guided Meditation: Melting Obstacles

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Hello, everyone, and welcome. Today the topic is one that's pretty central to this mindfulness practice, Dharma practice. And that is that generally in mindfulness practice, we are interested in the ideal and the way that it helps us to understand what gets in the way of the ideal.

So if the ideal is compassion, we're not pursuing the ideal directly. But in mindfulness practice, we are being mindful of what actually is. And when what actually is is blocking the compassion, compassion, that highlights that blocking. It highlights what's going on for us in a particular way, maybe in a useful way.

It's useful to see what blocks love, what blocks compassion, what blocks kindness. And to include that as part of mindfulness, not to be critical of it, not to be judgmental of it, and not to kind of engineer a way out of it, but to really stop and take a deep look at it. What is this? And in knowing it well, maybe allowing something to release, something to let go. And then the ideal can stand out by itself, if that's what's appropriate.

So rather than... So sometimes if compassion is hard to access, to not be discouraged by that, but actually to be encouraged. This gives us a chance to learn something about ourselves, to learn what gets in the way of the compassion. And this is a hugely important life skill, to be able to understand ourselves really well in what blocks love, compassion, freedom, even what blocks mindfulness, and to learn to address it in a spacious way, in a kind way.

So to begin with a posture of attention, and hopefully those of you who have been meditating for a while now will have a posture which you're familiar with, a posture of attention that, with very familiarity with a posture, begins to settle you into a mindful state, attentive state to what's here in the present moment. And to spend a little bit time fine-tuning the posture,

making small adjustments, both to be more comfortable, to be more relaxed, and also to begin awakening the body's capacity for being aware, attentive.

Gently closing the eyes, and a gentle way of entering into your body, almost as if awareness is melting in through your body. And as awareness spreads and melts into your body, when it touches places of tension, of holding, those begin to melt as well, to release, to relax.

And as you breathe in, what's the influence that breathing in has through your body? The movements of the chest, the shoulders, the movement into places of holding. And as you exhale, relaxing the body, softening, melting, and seeing if there's ever so gentle, small adjustments to your breathing that makes the breathing more pleasant, more relaxed. Maybe by relaxing the belly, maybe relaxing the shoulders, maybe relaxing at the end of the exhale.

So the exhale naturally extends a little longer. Gently having a longer exhale. And using that extended exhale is a time to soften the thinking mind, where the tensions in the mind also begin to melt, especially at the end of the exhale.

In any way that your heart is closed, any way in which there's resistance to an open, sensitive heart, notice that, allow it to be that way. But notice it and feel the closeness, the resistance. Breathe with it, feel it for a few breaths. And then whatever resistance or holding back, way of being closed you are, allow it also to melt, melt back into the body.

And as you sit here, might there be anything that interferes with your capacity for compassion, goodwill, love, and love? It could be as simple as you're distracted, preoccupied with something. Noticing how that preoccupation might keep you at a distance from your heart's capacity to have compassion or love or kindness.

Is there any fear or resistance to dropping into the heart's deep softness and tenderness, where compassion comes? And if there is, spend some time feeling that resistance, that fear, as if it has permission to be there, appreciating how it keeps you at a distance from settling into an open heart.

Is there any way that your heart center, the center where love, emotion, compassion might be for you, that is closed, that is tense or tightened up? Gently, quietly, with a silent mind, feel and sense that closeness, that tightness, as if it's okay for it to be there, breathing with it. And maybe with the end of the exhale, the relaxing to an extended exhale, maybe the way the heart is closed or resisting can melt, together with the fading exhale.

And to find where in your body compassion is most associated with. There's some place in the body which is the home or the place from which compassion might arise. Gently breathe

with that place. Breathe through it and see if you can feel the softness, the warmth, maybe the radiance of a compassionate heart.

And if there's anything that seems to interfere or resist that soft, compassionate heart, hold them both together, the heart and the resistance, the heart and the way you might be closed. Hold them together gently, kindly, breathing with them, getting to know them, accompanying them.

And if you don't try to be compassionate, but simply allow yourself to be sensitive, soft, present, is there anything in the family of love that is alive within you? Kindness, goodwill, care, compassion, or maybe a warm-heartedness that has no name or word associated with it? The simple glow, warmth, warmth, a radiant light within.

Breathe with it, and as you exhale, spread it outward, as if it can melt out into the air around you, as if it lights up or warms up the space all around. And with eyes of care, eyes of compassion, love, warmth, gaze upon the world. Gaze upon this suffering world. Gaze upon all the suffering of war, violence, oppression.

Noticing if there is any resistance or ways of being closed or distressed which interferes with the soft, relaxed compassion. And for the next couple of minutes, if possible, trust the simplicity of relaxed compassion, the simplicity of a relaxed, compassionate gaze that looks out upon the suffering world with care, with love, with compassion, wishing for the alleviation of people suffering.

From my heart to the hearts of all beings, may you know that we wish you well, we wish you well, of freedom from suffering, of freedom from war, oppression, poverty, freedom from prejudice, bias, discrimination. May all beings be free of suffering. May all beings be safe. May all beings live in peace.

And as we gaze upon the world with relaxed compassion, and an opportunity arises for us to help make this possible, let us help. Let us contribute to the lessening of suffering in this world, and certainly not adding more. Thank you.