

Guided Meditation: Flexibility

Ines Freedman

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So welcome back to... I'll be continuing the topic this week in *Art of Being Nobody and Somebody*, looking at the self and not self and inner, very practical means.

So, let me start with many years ago, fairly soon after a two-week retreat, I found myself very stressed out working at the computer. It seemed that all the calm and clarity of the retreat had left. I was inspired to take on a daily practice at that time of doing walking meditation whenever I stood up from sitting, seeing how caught up I got, how my peace left so easily. And so this is what I decided to do.

Every time I got from sitting, I would just walk to my next activity, whether it was the bathroom, 20 feet to the kitchen, not for long, not slowly, not formally, but just completely disengaging from my thinking and walking with awareness. And I found there were so many opportunities to do this in my day, walking to the car, walking to the store. I got up a lot. I got up a lot.

And what surprised me the most was not the walking itself and how wonderful that was, but how challenging it was to let go of what I had been thinking about in order to actually arrive in the walking. My mind continued. It just wanted to continue doing whatever it was doing, to keep planning, excuse me, to keep problem solving, rehearsing, remembering. It felt like a sacrifice to set my thoughts down. At times the clinging would feel desperate.

But again and again, I just kept practicing, releasing the stream of thought and simply feeling the body walking. And regularly met resistance. It seemed it was so much easier on retreat or even in my daily meditation. But over time, something changed. Letting go of the thinking no longer felt like such a loss. The mind became much more flexible, just less compelled to follow and finish every thread. I'd feel like I had to finish that thought, no matter how trivial, had to finish it.

I began more willing to disengage from my thinking, to just drop it, to let it go. What was interesting is that whenever I returned to my work, I felt more refreshed, more creative, more productive. And it's this flexibility of mind that I'd like to point to in this meditation, and it's this morning. So let's begin.

Taking an alert and relaxed posture and gently closing our eyes and very consciously putting aside any concerns we may have, leaving later for later, arriving fully, settling in the body. We might allow the spine to rise with dignity without any rigidity, maybe like bamboo. Bamboo is strong, but it bends with the wind. It survives storms because it's so flexible. See if the body can embody that quality now, strong but not stiff, relaxed but not collapsed, yielding, moving with every breath.

And taking a few slow deep breaths, and with each exhale relaxing a little bit more deeply, a little more settled. And when you're ready, allowing the breath to return to its natural rhythm, allowing it to come and go just as it is, feeling the body breathing, the gentle movements of expansion and release. Perhaps noticing where the body might habitually tighten. See if there's any bracing, maybe the jaw, the belly, the shoulders, the forehead, the hands. Allowing any of those areas to soften, feeling any release, even slight, like bamboo in the wind. A rigid tree may crack in the storm, but bamboo bends and returns. It's resilient because it's not brittle.

Just resting in the rhythm of the breath, allowing any sensations, sounds, thoughts to rise and pass away, being flexible, allowing everything that arises to come and go with our resistance, just bending like the bamboo, just hearing, feeling, experience moving through awareness. If any concerns or judgments arise, no need to reject them. See if they too can move like weather through an open sky, like wind through bamboo, flexible, easy. No need to suppress them. No need to follow them. And when they pass, returning to this body breathing again and again.

If at times the mind says, "I don't want this. I need this moment to be different," just recognizing the tension, the resistance, allowing softening, willingness to meet life just as it is, not how we want it to be. The bamboo doesn't argue with the wind. In response, maybe feeling the body more globally now, sensing it not as something solid or fixed but as movement, sensation, flow, changing moment by moment. Breathing happening, sensations coming and going, thoughts arising. No need to hold on to any of it.

Sometimes flexibility means yielding. Sometimes it means being more upright. Sometimes it means beginning again. The wisdom is in responding freshly to the moment, to this moment, this living moment moving and changing on its own, this body breathing here now. And as

we near the end of the meditation, maybe taking a few deeper breaths, connecting with your posture, your body stable and relaxed like bamboo, rooted in the earth, open to the sky, able to bend, able to return.