

Guided Meditation: "Yes"

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Warm greetings from Insight Meditation Center. Delighted to be here with all of you this way, and particularly for the topic this week and for today. And now the overall topic is appreciative joy. And one of the strong associations I have with having some deep appreciation and joy with appreciation, warm greetings, is the word yes. And I've found over the years that this word yes has been a great support for me in my meditation practice, my mindfulness practice, and my life.

And it isn't so much that I am affirming something, or if anything, what I'm affirming is the mindfulness, the awareness of whatever's happening. And there's a kind of delightful feeling of yes, I'll be aware for this. Yes, this is wonderful to be aware, to be present. Yes, to being here with this experience. So the experience itself might not be what I'm affirming with the yes. And necessarily, I might have a different opinion on whether it should be there or not, or judgment about it in some way.

But even so, the central feature in any experience is our being aware of it. And it's its own thing, it's its own miracle. And so to say yes and to recognize that miracle. And it's not a few times where I see something that maybe we can call unwholesome, or maybe unwise, happening in my mind, something I'm caught in. And then I'm aware of it, clearly aware that that's there. And I smile.

I'm not smiling at the presence of this. I'm smiling in the freedom that that awareness gives me. Yes, this too I can be aware of; this too I can let be there and be free of it. Give it breathing room, leave it alone. The awareness is such a beautiful, wonderful yes to awareness.

And so one of the ways of practicing meditation that I have occasionally done, and I'll offer you today, is to have as a recurring word that you repeat in the meditation in the quietest, calmest, most kind of peaceful way that you can, but also with a certain enthusiasm. The

word yes. Yes to the inhale. Yes to the exhale. Yes, I recognize what's happening here. Yes, I know there's suffering here.

Yes, I'm aware of it. Yes. And it doesn't have to be more elaborate than that. It doesn't have to add any more words, like yes to my suffering, yes to the inhale. But in what it is, it's an attitude, the yes that is meant to open us. Yes.

And then the movement is like this. It's almost as if the arms are being spread out horizontally, widely, and we step forward with an open chest. Yes, I'm here for this. I'm receiving this. I'm connecting to this. Yes.

And so yes to the breath, and there's a kind of sense of openness. Yes to this experience. And this yes keeps us in the present moment. The yes is always to the present. If you're thinking about what happened 10 years ago, it isn't that you say yes to what happened. You say yes to the awareness of remembering.

Yes to remembering that makes space for it. And in a way we kind of step back from it. We step away from it. We're not in it. We're certainly not collapsing in anything, or savoring anything, or overwhelmed by something, because we have this wonderful capacity, yes, that makes us almost bigger than whatever it is.

So assuming a meditation posture, and maybe rocking your body back and forth a little bit just to kind of find a nice centered posture, sitting bones maybe centered on the surface they're resting against. And gently closing your eyes, and with an attitude of yes, allow your body to take a few deeper breaths. One way to take a deeper breath is to take a comfortably deep breath, pause for an instant, and then do it a little bit more. And then relax on the exhale. Maybe a little bit longer relaxation, longer exhale.

And there too, it might be interesting at the end of the exhale to pause for an instant and either exhale more by letting go, or in letting go somehow, shoulders and chest relax further. And then letting the breathing return to normal. And with the exhale, continue to relax. And on the exhale, if it's comfortable, extend the exhale a little bit so there's a little more letting go, relaxing. You might try that.

Relaxing in the body, the mind, the heart. And then letting yourself be at ease the best you can. Appreciating the simplicity, the simplest ways in which you have present moment awareness. Maybe the inhale comes and appears. It's known, it's felt as a present moment experience. The exhale.

And to gently, peacefully, calmly, as a gentle breeze in the mind, say the word yes to what is happening, to what you're aware of. Not to go along with it, but almost open wide, stepping

towards it, being with it. Yes to being aware. Yes to being bigger in awareness than anything one is aware of. Yes to receiving it in the largeness of awareness.

Whenever you find yourself drifting off in thought, at that point consider that saying yes to what's happening is a better alternative than drifting in thoughts. A yes that connects you, grounds you to this moment, moment after moment. A yes that is opening, relaxing, receptive, willing to be here with this. Can the word yes, the attitude yes, help you to fill in the present moment, step into it more fully? Here, now.

In a way that the mind quiets, the stilling of thoughts so there's more room to be aware. And as we come to the end of this sitting, let your attention bring in thoughts and remembrances of the world around you, the people of your life, maybe the people you'll see today. And while you're still in meditation here, bring a yes to those people. Yes to being aware. Yes to letting them be present in your heart.

Yes, that deeply cares for them, loves them, appreciates them, sees them as someone through whom your heart can sing, can smile. Yes, smiling not necessarily for what they do or how they are. But yes to being aware of them. Yes to giving them some space in your heart, at least in the privacy of meditation. Yes to being present for the people you'll encounter today.

And yes to the possibility that they can be happy. Yes, to the possibility they can be peaceful and safe. If nothing else, they can be peaceful and safe in the field of your awareness, in your presence. We offer them safety. We offer them peace. We offer them care, respect. Yes.

May we go into the world with a wish for the welfare of others, a yes to their welfare. A yes that is more than just an affirmation; it's an offering of peace. May all beings be happy. May all beings be safe. May all beings be peaceful. May all beings be free. Thank you.