

Guided Meditation: Don't Make it Worse

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Hello and welcome. Welcome to this virtual participation in the Insight Meditation Center at our meditation hall here. The topic overall is love. And now we come into the form of love called *equanimity*.

As part of this introduction to *equanimity*, I want to offer you a minimum definition of love, that at least it has to contain this to be love. And that is to not wish harm on anyone: to oneself, to others, to the world. To not wish harm, not cause harm. It might seem that that's too minimal of a definition for love. Love has to be more than that. But when we consider how much harm gets done in this world, it's a phenomenal act of generosity, a phenomenal act of love, for that harm to stop and not contribute to it.

And one of the ways that we harm is we harm ourselves. And it's how many people have said that we can't harm others without harming ourselves. So as we do this meditation, a meditation on non-harming as a way of understanding the importance, the value of *equanimity*, I'll offer you the little saying, a little guidance, instruction: Don't make it worse. Be sensitive here in the present moment to the movements of the mind, the impulses of the heart, where if you're really honest, really sensitive, you see that you're adding stress, distress, anxiety, pressure, tension, that you're losing touch, you're harming by ignoring, not being really here for yourself.

Love always, love itself always, lives in the present moment. That's its home. If we want to love, stay present. Stay where it exists, where it lives. And if you want to love, stay in the present moment enough to really be sensitive.

You wander off in thought, and you can see those thoughts are stressful. You wander off in thoughts, and maybe they're not stressful, but maybe they're delightful. But there's a kind of disjunction, a kind of separation, shutting out from oneself. There's pain, and we attack the

pain. We're angry, we're aversive, we're harming ourselves. We go into fantasies of desire. And that, again, is the disconnection from a deep, deep presence here.

So to sit with this idea of don't make it worse. Don't do anything that causes harm. Radical practice of non-harming. And if that's all you do, it's phenomenal.

So to gently, tenderly assume a meditation posture, and closing the eyes, and taking a moment, some moments here, to take stock of yourself. How are you? How are you showing up here for this meditation? To really say hello to yourself and recognize the present moment you, in your body, in your emotions, and in your thinking mind.

Maybe as you exhale, relaxing your body, softening when you come to the end of the exhale. Can you relax and let go so the exhale continues just a teeny bit more? And the relaxing of the body goes deeper. Where that second addition to the exhale is the time you allow the thinking mind to become quiet, so you can be more sensitive to this deeper movement of letting go, relaxing.

As you exhale, relaxing your heart center, settling and quieting the mind to feel and relax the heart center. And as you exhale, relax the thinking mind. And if it's comfortable to do that second release in the exhale, let the thinking mind become quieter so you can sense and feel the inner qualities of the thinking mind.

And then to feel your breathing, to immerse yourself, enter into the experience of the body breathing. As you exhale, letting the thinking mind become quiet. So there's a heightened sensitivity, bandwidth of awareness, to sense the inner quality of breathing. And then feeling and sensing whatever way there is peace or calm or tranquility. Maybe in some deep inner way. The inner quality of your being. A peace, a calm feeling, that has no reason, or not there for any reasons except being calm, breathing with it, breathing through it.

And as we continue, you might stay lightly, easily with your breathing, with your calm, whatever degree it's there, and then appreciate that a form of love is not making it worse, not adding pressure, tension, harm, or suffering by anything you do with your thinking, your feeling, your attitude. And for the next minutes, let that be your primary practice, to have enough love of the present moment experience that you refrain from going along with any movement that hurts, causes harm, tension, suffering. Are you contributing any degree of unease? It might be a form of love to allow yourself to be here in a simple way, not continuing with the thoughts, the attitudes, the impulses that add stress, anxiety, aversion, that are deflating, discouraging. Don't worry about doing better. Just don't make things worse.

And as we come to the end of the sitting, consider for a few moments how the minimum

definition of love, the minimum requirement for love, is to not wish any harm. And a second, deeper expression of love is to want to walk through the world without causing harm, to be able to enter into communities, meet with people, even be alone, and not make the situation worse, not add stress or anxiety, fear, hurt. To have the deep wish to not cause harm is a profound form of love.

May it be that this meditation that we do, the gathering we've had today, may it be that we become the widespread community of people who go into the day sensitive and careful not to cause harm, not to discourage anyone or deflate them or hurt anyone in any way. May all beings be happy. May all beings be safe. May all beings be peaceful. May all beings be free. Thank you.