

Guided Meditation: Friendly Mindfulness

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Hello and welcome. I delight in the names and the greetings in the chat, from both people whose names I know and from people and names I've never seen, I think. It's been a very nice way of starting here.

This week, the topic is the expressions of love. There's a way in which love grows when it is expressed, when it is lived. If it's only a private affair, a private experience that we keep to ourselves, that could be quite nice. But it limits the ways in which it becomes the compost or the nutrient for not only itself to grow, but all kinds of other ways that we grow in the *Dharma*, in Buddhist practice.

The expression I want to emphasize today is under the idea of kind speech, to speak kindly. For meditation, it means speaking kindly to oneself, speaking kindly during meditation. Is there some way, sincerely, that you can reorient how you talk to yourself, how you think, how you orient yourself to knowing your experience in meditation, so that you can do so as a friend, in a friendly way, a kind way?

There's two ways to do this that I want to emphasize today in this meditation, or a primary way. In mindfulness meditation, the idea is to really notice what's happening as it's happening, to be present, to offer presence or accompaniment, to really accompany what's happening in you as it's happening. If what you're doing is thinking about the past, you want to shift your orientation so you're clearly sitting down next to yourself, sitting with yourself, and accompanying yourself in a kind, friendly way. Oh, here is thinking about the past. It's really clear that what's happening is, as a human being, you're now here in the present moment, thinking about the past, and you know that's the case.

So you're not locked in or lost or being swept away by those thoughts. It's almost as if you step outside of that train of thought and then clearly see it in a friendly, kind way. That way

you're not cooked in it or lost in it. So whatever it is, if you are having trouble with your breathing and are somehow aversive to yourself or aversive to your breath, step away from that. It's okay, but see it and notice it as a present-moment phenomenon, and know it in a friendly way. Oh, here there's aversion. So you're not identified with it, you're not sinking into it or being hooked into that aversion, but you step out of it enough to accompany it, to be its friend and be friendly towards it, in a sense.

There's one way in particular for this meditation, for how to do this kind speech in meditation, this noticing. It's called mental noting, but I'll explain to you how to do it in a different way than maybe you've ever been taught. That is, using one word to acknowledge that noting. One word that clearly is the word with which you step away and greet the experience. Oh, hi. It's like saying, oh, hi, hi, but a word that names it for what it is.

So if it's thinking about the past, you would say remembering, or if you are being aversive, aversion. If you're with the in-breath, you might say the word in, or expanding, opening. The exhale might be exhale, or out, or collecting, settling back, settling, whatever it might be, the word for you. But the way you say the word, see if you can say the word with clarity as if it's a single musical note. Maybe someone strikes a piano key or hits one single string on a guitar.

So it's a single note in vast silence, vast space. You're kind of saying, remembering, but in saying it, you're somehow letting the spaciousness, the silence, the stillness, be there, as if it's being said in a vast space that holds it all. That's where the awareness is, this vast space, open awareness that can just really allow and see what's there without being identified with it. And saying that word in a friendly way. Remembering. Breathing. In. Pain. Sound.

But the important part is not exactly saying the word, but how it's one note in the larger field of silence. Silence of the mind, spaciousness of the mind, stillness of the mind. Space, stillness, silence is in effect there, if you just kind of quietly listen, quietly tune in, allow the thinking mind to recede. And that's where this kind expression, the kind way of speaking, is there in the mental note and the great space.

So assume a meditation posture and gently close the eyes. For two or three breaths, breathe a little bit more deeply and relax on the exhale. And then let the breathing return to normal. What is the simplest way you can recognize what's happening for you and acknowledge it with a friendly note, maybe a note that acknowledges in such a way that you can relax a little about what your experience is because it's been known kindly?

And then settle into the experience of breathing, accompanying the body breathing. With every exhale, let go of thoughts, settling in, and in a very relaxed, slow pace, use a single note to recognize what's happening, a note that is said quietly, peacefully in the mind. A single note, like a musical note, played in vast silence. If you are thinking, see if you can adjust the way you speak to yourself or relate to your experience. So it's a kind speech, friendly, a friendly way of noting, knowing, recognizing your experience here and now.

Can you shift the tone of voice with which you think to yourself so that it's kind and friendly, in a very simple, ordinary way? How you think, how you recognize your experience, is done in a friendly way. Perhaps being careful not to miss an opportunity to be present for your experience in a friendly way. Maybe a single note, word of recognition spoken in a field of silence.

And as we come to the end of this sitting, first finish with some kindness, appreciation of giving yourself this time to meditate, of your effort, taking another moment to recognize how you are now in a friendly way, and then to turn that positive regard, friendly regard, out into the world, to gaze upon the world as a simple friend, ready to speak words of kindness, of friendliness to those you meet, considering how wonderful it would be if everyone could have a genuine, healthy form of happiness, ease, well-being, peace. May everyone have this. May we all support each other in this. May all beings be happy, may all beings be safe, may all beings be peaceful, may all beings be free.

Thank you.