

Guided Meditation: Mindfulness as Respect

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So, hello and welcome. Sometimes we all say things twice when we have particular value or meaning or emphasis. So I want to offer you again my warm greetings and appreciate very much our time together.

And this idea of saying something again to really give emphasis to it can also be applied to mindfulness meditation, where it is not so much saying something again, but giving something a second look. The first time we are aware of something, it just comes into awareness. But the second time can be somewhat intentional, a choice. Let's take a deeper look at this, or let's really be connected to this. Let's now really see this, or be aware of it, or know it. Not to strain, not to search, not to analyze, but just simply to stop and be more fully present in an intentional way.

So there are these two movements in practice, in mindfulness practice. There's what comes into awareness on its own, naturally, and there are a lot of things that happen all the time. And sometimes in practice, we stay close to that mode of being. And it's such a relief not to be the doer or the actor or the one who has to make choices. Sometimes it's called choiceless awareness. Sometimes open awareness. Sometimes it's called non-directed awareness.

And so this awareness, it just allows things to appear. And we kind of settle back and just become aware and allow the whole dance of experience to be there. That's one way. The other way that's as important has some intentionality to it, some sense of purpose. Yes, okay, let me really know this now. Let me stay here and take it in and let it register more deeply. Let me feel it, let me know it, let me see it.

And the second way I like to refer to as respect. Because in Latin the words re-inspect mean to look again. And so we look again. We give it a second look. And this is very close. The intentional, purposeful way is when we choose to love.

There probably is no love without respect. There's no love without gazing on people with their autonomy, their agency, their value, maybe their sacredness, their beauty, that they're valuable and respect-worthy, to stop and give them a second look, to listen deeply. We can hear, and then we can choose to hear, and we can choose to hear with love, with respect, as if they are important. Not just as if, but because they are important, because they're valuable. And part of love is to convey this respect to people, that they count, they're valuable, because we'll listen to them, we'll hear them.

And so in meditation, that form of love that is imbued with respect can be there in the other half of mindfulness practice, the practice where there's a choice. Let's take a deeper look, a clearer look at this. Let's register this. Let's respect this, whatever is going on, to see it more deeply, to allow it to be there and to show itself more deeply in whatever way that it wants. It's not respect-worthy to be probing and pushing and searching for something. The respect is just to allow something to be itself, but to really take it in, see it.

So we can do that in meditation, and it can be a form of love. So, to assume a meditation posture, and right there, putting your body into a nice meditative posture, that can be done with respect. We don't do it in a hurry, but we take our time, because we're respecting the body, the posture, to feel it, to know it well. So, in a sense, the posture that we should sit in reveals itself. It's not so much a policy of how we should sit, but through a deep inner sensibility that we start listening to. And how does the body want to sit so it's alert, comfortable, and gently close the eyes.

And then to respect or love your own personal experience. Not to have an agenda first, and not to try to do something or criticize or get away from anything. But the respectful thing is just to be present for yourself as you are, as if you're going to listen or take in deeply here in a quiet way, without overriding and trying to get rid of something or to change anything. Deep respect for how you happen to be right now. And to allow that deep check-in to be about your body, letting your attention roam around the body.

And with respect for every tension, every place in your body, just saying hello and giving it a second look, a deeper look, a deeper feel. Maybe letting the body reveal itself. But then whatever arises, give it a second look. And gently taking some deeper breaths, fuller breaths. And as you exhale, relax your body, soften, where breathing in and feeling your body more fully is a purposeful act of respect, a purposeful act of sensing, feeling, knowing, listening more deeply, and the exhale is a relaxing.

And then whatever arises for you as you're here, meditating on your breathing, there's the way that it simply appears, maybe unbidden, a thought, a feeling, a sensation, a sound. And

then, when it seems right, choose to let it register more deeply what this experience is as a form of respect, as a form of love, as a form of being available to know what has arisen clearly, fully, where to know and to love are just about synonymous. Whatever is happening, give it a second look, and have that second look be an act of respect, an act of love. The second look is an expression of love, that whatever comes into awareness is something to gaze upon kindly.

And in the quiet stillness of your meditation, in spite of maybe the noise of a lot of chatter, thoughts, deep down, is there a place, a tender place, a warm place, a radiating place of love, of kindness, or friendliness, or compassion, appreciative joy, a loving equanimity, a sense of care? And if there is, an expression of that is to gaze upon the world with respect. To be willing to give everything a second look, to look past our judgments, our bias, our reactivity and resistance and fears, and with clear eyes, clear ears, to listen, to see, to know with loving respect, and to gaze upon the world with loving respect.

To spend a minute or so at the end of a meditation centered on yourself, centered in your heart, and to gaze out across the lands, to bring to mind the people in your life, strangers across the lands and the world, and give them the gift of respect, the gift of seeing them in their dignity, their worth, seeing them of value. Maybe remembering that once upon a time, chances are that they had parents who looked upon them with love and kindness, and maybe still do. They gaze upon everyone with respect as an expression of love.

May all beings be happy. May all beings be safe. May all beings be peaceful. May all beings be free, and may our respect for others be how we begin to live in this world for the welfare and happiness of all, because how can we really benefit people if we don't respect them?

Thank you.