

Guided Meditation: The Call of Sensations

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Hello and welcome.

The topic this week is the characteristics of the *dharma*, not the teachings of the Buddha, but what those teachings point to: the *dharma* that he is pointing to in each of us. The idea of being here and now in meditation is very common. The idea of being present, being mindful of what is happening as it is happening, is common, but it is less understood why we are doing this. There are many, many ways, many reasons. But one reason is so we can get close to the place where there is a deep intelligence within us.

An intelligence where there is information and response to that information deep within us. We cannot exactly appropriate it or make claims that it is the conscious you that is doing the intellectual work, the mental work, the understanding. It is the preverbal understanding and the preverbal responding that sometimes is almost innate, almost biological, that goes on. It is functioning all the time in subtle ways, background ways. In meditation, we come into the present moment.

Because then we make room, make space, for this deeper intelligence to operate. It is not so much that we have to do the work of meditation, as it is that we have to make space: the space of awareness, breathing room, for this deeper place where sensations, knowing, recognition, and being present connect. This allows for the meeting of sense data and this deeper intelligence.

So, I will give you one example. Say that you are quite tense and your shoulders are up high, and a friend of yours comes along and simply puts their hands on your shoulders to reassure you. Only then do you realize your shoulders are tense. In realizing they are tense, not even thinking about it, inherent in that tension is the release, letting go. That is what wants to happen there.

If there is awareness of that tension, the tension wants to let go. It is almost as if it is not even necessary to choose to relax and let go. It is just built right into the whole kind of package of awareness of the tension.

Or, if there is a feeling of joy or delight or pleasure or love as we are meditating, and we make room for that, recognize, “Ah, this is good,” rather than going back into our distracted stories. “Ah, this is good. This is wonderful. This is satisfying.” Or just be present for this. That glow of the love, the warmth, can grow, can be there, can have an influence on us.

“This is good. This is healthy.” It is not so much that we are choosing that it is good or healthy or helpful. Something in us knows that, ah, this is where we should go. This is better than repeating the same distracted thought I have had a few hundred times now, that undermines me, that is critical of something or someone, maybe myself.

So that is to get really close to the present moment, so that some deeper knowing, that is not your usual knowing, something deep in your system, can know and find its way with the present-moment information that is becoming revealed because we are quiet and mindful. So first, there is a task of settling in, settling in, becoming quieter, and awakening a deeper sensitivity to the present moment. Then, beginning to kind of give ourselves over to this deeper knowing that guides us.

So, assume a meditation posture, ideally a posture where you can hold your body comfortably still for the length of meditation. Because a still body can promote a quieting of the inner life. Gently close the eyes. In just a small way, a comfortable way, a slow way, take a longer inhale, just long enough that it stays comfortable for you. Then slowly exhale as long as you can, as long as it is comfortable.

As you exhale, let the body relax, as if the relaxing is following the exhale. Then let your breathing return to normal. As you exhale, continue to soften and relax different parts of your body. You might see if pausing at the end of the exhale can allow for a deeper relaxation into that pause. As you exhale, relax the thinking mind, the thinking muscle.

Settle in to being with the body in a still, quiet way, being sensitive to the sensations of breathing in your body. Be sensitive to how breathing wants to breathe, that breathing can breathe itself. Be sensitive to how your attention is drawn, is invited, to experience the body breathing in different ways, at different times, different places in the body, different aspects of breathing. Rather than being the director or the controller of the practice, be sensitive to how the breathing body shows itself to you.

Is there anything in the sensations of breathing that wants to relax or soften? Not that it

needs to or is able to easily, but is there a signal, a sensation associated with the desire for softening, quieting, relaxing? The breathing. Rather than focusing on thoughts, leave your thoughts alone, and bring your attention deeper underneath your thoughts. Sense and feel the body breathing.

While you attend to your breathing, see if you can notice the way, or almost the way, breathing invites you to sense and feel the sensations of breathing in different ways at different moments, discovering how breathing reveals itself. There are the sensations of breathing, and there is the awareness, your awareness, mindfulness of breathing. Between the two, there is the *dharma*. Sometimes appearing as a call, an invitation: “Come here. This is what breathing wants you to feel and sense.”

Listen to the call of breathing. To what it is in breathing that calls for attention in the cycle of breathing in and breathing out. And do not force anything. Do not strain. Stay aware, so you can simply feel that call, that revelation.

Is there a way that the tensions and activation of the thinking mind, that which keeps you away from centering on breathing, wants to relax, wants to soften, like the shoulders? Being distracted takes work, and there is a way of relaxing, letting go of the energy of distraction, the pressure, tightness. There is a relaxing into a sensitivity to the body’s experience of breathing.

As we come to the end of the sitting, if you can drop below your thinking mind to the place where there is a nonverbal knowing, a nonverbal sensing of breathing, sensing the body’s experience of breathing. In that sensing of breathing, what is it that is known, nonverbally, that can guide you to a life without tension?

And then consider, feel, whatever calm or goodness or well-being or benefit has come from this meditation, and how it can be converted or directed or tapped into to consider the welfare of others. That others too may be happy and free, calm. May they not be agitated or tense or distracted. May all beings be happy. May all beings be safe. May all beings be free.

May all beings be peaceful, and may we, in our speech, in our actions, in ways of thinking, contribute to the welfare of others. May all beings be happy. Thank you.