

Guided Meditation: Health

Gil Fronsdal

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Hello, and I'm delighted to be here with you. It's very nice to receive the warm greetings in the text.

So, for this meditation, I'd like to offer you a practice, a way of practicing, a way of engaging in the practice that you maybe already do. That is both an aid to being interested in staying in the present moment and interested more and more in what's happening in the present moment in your direct experience than in what you can think about. Thinking is thinking about things which are not here and now, and thinking about just having discursive thoughts about other things. So, it's more interesting. It makes the present more interesting, and also helps you enter more deeply into your direct experience, so that your direct experience is a guide for you to find your way, to find your path. In a sense, you become your own teacher, your own guide.

And that is, as you sit here, you'll be doing a lot of things. When you meditate, you'll, for example, adjust your posture. You'll decide to bring your attention to your breathing. You'll wonder, where should you focus on the breathing today? The usual place is fine, but there's another place where breathing is stronger, and there might be some sensations in your body that maybe need attention. So you'll direct your attention to the body sensations, or sounds, or maybe emotions are predominant.

Whatever you are, every moment, whatever you're doing, the subtle small things that you're doing, navigating with all the time, feel your way into doing what is healthy for you. Let the notion of healthy be your guide. What feels right? What feels healthy? What feels wholesome? What feels like this is supportive of you?

And it can be as subtle as how you move your attention to some object of attention. If you feel an ache in your knee and you're going to be mindful of it, how you turn your attention

and place it there. How can you do it in a way that's healthy, that is easeful, that has ease in it, has health in it, has goodness in it? It's like you enjoy doing it. This is good, as opposed to not healthy.

And if you're following your breathing, what's a healthy way of being with the breath? What's a healthy way of breathing? Is the way you're breathing the most healthy? And when I use the word healthy, I don't mean dramatically healthy and long-term healthy. I'm talking about the very feelings, sensations, the way it is. Oh yeah, taking, relaxing more in the exhale, that feels like it moves in the healthy direction.

That has a subtle feeling to it of being more right, more easeful, more connected. So you're searching for, you're feeling your way. And if you can't sense what's healthy, then choose maybe some related criteria, like what is inspiring, what feels right, what feels easeful, what feels like it connects you more deeply to yourself. So there's a present-moment criteria that guides you into the present moment with all the little choices you make.

And one of those choices is to start again if your mind wanders off in thought. If you notice you're thinking, there's a choice there that you have to make. Can you make that choice? Can you make that switch from thinking to being present for yourself again in a way that feels healthy or sane or easeful, feels peaceful, in a way that kind of has within it some feeling of being reassuring and settling? Like, yes, this is good to come back, and I'll come back, and not in a hurry, not with shame or anger or blame or the idea that I'm doing things wrong or shouldn't be thinking.

Those kinds of thoughts maybe are not so healthy for you. But it's healthy: oh, it's time to go back to the breathing. Let me gently move back, start again with my breathing, and let me start it in a place where it feels most reassuring, most centering, most healthy for me. So make that continuously in a healthy way, a relaxed way. You want to do this in a relaxed, healthy way itself, but stay close to that constant kind of guidance.

Like you would be if you were following a maybe little bit indistinct path in the forest. You would search for the next step in the path continuously, and it would be the good path, the path that takes you out of the brambles, out of the difficult rocky area. Just stay away from the rattlesnakes. Just right here. Stay here. This is the next step. This is the next step for your meditation.

So, to sit in a healthy way for you, where health also has a feeling of a kind of healthy, energizing feeling, awakening feeling in your body. The present-moment experience of what's healthy, even if you're sick and not feeling healthy at all, more generally, is a subtle feeling

of more aliveness. Yes, in spite of being sick and aching and tired, sitting this way gives a little more sense of aliveness. Adjusting the hands, the hands have a little bit more sense of healthy aliveness. Maybe there's an adjustment to the torso that frees up the space around the diaphragm. So the whole area of the diaphragm feels like there's more room.

Maybe it's healthy to relax the muscles of your body, relaxing the thinking mind, the thinking muscle. And maybe there's a way you can approach your breathing in a gentle, healthy way. Maybe not getting too close or too far away, but just the right distance in relationship to your breathing. That gives breathing breathing room. Maybe subtly adjusting your breathing so it feels more healthy, easeful.

And what would be the healthy orientation of the mind of awareness to accompany breathing, to make room for your breathing, so the sensations of breathing feel like they support you in life? And as we continue sitting, for each step along the way that you need to make a little choice, often these choices are done unconsciously. Feel your way, sense your way into what might feel healthy, useful, satisfying. Is it more healthy for you to allow the sensations of breathing to be received, like you're gently being massaged or stroked? Or is it more healthy for you to be the masseuse, the one who gently strokes the breathing?

And as we come to the end of this sitting, consider: has there been some way that the reference of healthiness has oriented you into the present moment, oriented you into the present moment in a welcoming way, in a beneficial way? Then, what is that mind? What is that orientation that has healthiness as its concern? Can that orientation be healthy? How can it be healthy?

This way of care, self-care, can it be directed towards others? Not that we're going to make them healthy, but can we be oriented to the welfare of others with that healthy mind? Mind concerned with welfare, health, and happiness, in a simple, ordinary way.

And as we end this sitting, may we offer our best wishes for the welfare and happiness of this world. May all beings be happy. May all beings be safe. May all beings be peaceful. May all beings be free. Thank you.