

Guided Meditation-Embodied Wholeness

Gil Fronsdal

August 26, 2026

Keywords: embodied experience, mindfulness of breathing, panoramic awareness, vitality, thinking mind, embodied cleanliness, goodwill, generosity, Buddha

Warm greetings from the Insight Meditation Center here in Redwood City, and very happy to be sitting here this morning.

And so, to begin, one of the really important reference points for our life, supports for life, partner for our life, guide for our life, is our embodied experience. It is being present in our body for all the sensations that the body offers us, presents us. And those aren't random. Those aren't kind of something to be dismissed as being incidental. There's a way in which the deeply embodied sensations are part of the whole intelligence of a full, complete life, holistic life.

If we're trying, if we think that the answers to our life's problems come through thinking, if we're so focused on thinking about the past and what happened to us, or imagining futures, worried about, anxious about futures, we collapse or limit ourselves sometimes all too easily with a preoccupation with thoughts. A preoccupation with what the mind, the thinking mind, can do. And that preoccupation can obscure a rich sensitivity to the richness of what the body has to offer.

So I'll offer you a kind of comparison to what can happen in the body. Maybe some of you have been in a situation where maybe you were backpacking, or working in a very dirty job, gardening in the mud or something, or maybe you were sick. Maybe there was a time when you could not take a daily shower. But, you know, you had the grime and the dirt built up. And then, after some days, you were able to take a shower or take a nice bath.

And you came out of that somehow vibrating, the feeling clean, the feeling of embodied cleanliness. The skin was kind of vibrating a little bit and feeling good. And just the whole body kind of was smiling, in a sense, from the experience of being in the water, being cleaner, being refreshed. And that was an embodied feeling.

Some of you might have had an experience like that of exercising or doing some physical activity that left you kind of feeling much more grounded or connected to the energetic body, the vibrating body, the flow of sensations in the body. And it just felt so good to feel it and sense it. So that can happen in meditation. Not only that, but one of the orientations in meditation is to begin trusting that, resting in that, feeling that, letting that be kind of the context in which we do *mindfulness of breathing*, or even mindfulness of thinking. It is being held in this wider field of embodied sensations.

They could be very subtle. They could be, you know, some people—and it might be some other sensations which seem more pervasive through the body—seemingly like a subtle vibration or flow of energy or flow of sensations, a subtle warmth or radiance. And to feel that, let's take that in.

The Buddha actually talked about how meditation can bring a sense of embodied cleanliness. Just the meditation itself, no shower needed. Something about the inner life, inner sensations being able to flow freely, without the restrictions that happen by clinging, resisting, tightening up, without the redirecting of the flow of awareness into our thinking mind. Something begins to open here, flow, grow. And the Buddha sometimes talks about this having a sense of abundance, a physical embodied sense of abundance.

So, not that we have to feel that today, but I'd like to guide you and see if we can have that little bit—the context of the embodied sensations—as the background, the underground, the context for sitting in meditation.

So, assume a meditation posture. And whether you're sitting or lying down or standing, or whatever way your posture is, can you adjust it so that nothing feels restricted or collapsed? But more, there's a sense of openness in the chest, the diaphragm, the belly, rather than the torso collapsing. Maybe in a couch, there's a feeling that the body, the torso, is being kind of lifted up, held up, so that there's a sense of vitality, intentionality, vitality in sitting upright or in laying down, quite straight and open.

With the head kind of adjusted, the arms and hands adjusted, so that the intentionality around the posture, all the little pieces of it, are there to encourage and kind of the expression of attention. The body is participating in present-moment awareness. The body is not an afterthought, something to ignore. The body participates in being aware. Or, even better, we participate with how the body is aware.

The body is able to sense and feel and present itself in a way that feels present, attentive, centered here. Gently closing your eyes, then within your body, let there be a kind of broad

panoramic attentiveness, awareness of the whole body: the tingling, the warmth, the sense of vitality, vibration. Maybe there's a feeling of cohesion. The body is somehow held together.

And where in your body is there an embodied sense of vitality? Where is the body most kind of awake? Is it in the chest, in the belly, hands and arms, spine? Are there any subtle or not-so-subtle sensations in the body that feel something akin to a flow or a radiance, a vibrating hum that you can feel better if you allow the thinking mind to become quieter?

And within whatever panoramic sensing of the body that you have, allow your body, invite your body, to feel the sensations of breathing. If the whole body is the ocean, the sensations of breathing are like gentle waves. This part of the ocean lifts and falls. The body's ability to sense and feel. Stay close to that, and with that, to touch, to feel, to meet the sensations of breathing within this wider field of vitality in the body, the hum of the body.

And if there's a lot of thinking, switch your attention from the content of your thoughts to the sensations that come along with thinking—tightness, pressure, contraction, agitation, whatever it might be. And let those sensations, the sensations of the thinking muscle, let that be felt within the panoramic sense of embodiment. If you find yourself thinking, let go back into your body, like you're dropping your thinking into a compost pile—a warm compost pile that dissolves the thinking mind, dissolves the thoughts.

As you come to the end of the exhale, feel your body as widely as you can, and allow the inhale to grow, to appear within that body. As if breathing is a gentle wave or wind blowing across the body, awakening the body's ability to sense and feel. And then, feeling your body broadly, feeling the sensation body, however subtle or quiet it is, however much some places might be very intense and strong, see if you can open up as wide and panoramic as you can within the body.

And is there anything in that embodied sensing body that feels like a reference point for what it is to feel healthy in the body, or clean in the body, or something that feels wholesome? Something that makes you more sensitive to saying or doing or being in ways that are unhealthy, unwholesome. How is it that the embodied sensations can be a guide for what is nourishing from the inside out? And how is it that being centered in your body, aware through your body, might predispose you to avoid saying or doing things which are mean or unkind or worse?

How is it that the embodied sensing body is a reference point for how to live with others in a good way, to avoid causing harm? To be in touch with that part within that may be close to

naturally has goodwill, and turning that part of yourself out into the world.

As we finish this meditation, may it be that this practice that we do as individuals and collectively will serve to bring welfare and goodwill into this world of ours. May it be that this practice inspires a generosity of goodwill. May all beings be happy. May all beings be safe. May all beings be peaceful. May all beings be free.

Thank you.