

Guided Meditation: Offering & Receiving Wholesomeness

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A welcome to this week of exploring the topic of *kusala*, the topic of what's wholesome and what's skillful. An important characteristic of this idea is that it has a dual nature, at times. That has a lot to do with the impact or the experience—what it's like for us to be doing something. Is it wholesome for us? Is it healthy for us?

But sometimes it's the other: Is it healthy and wholesome and useful for others? What's remarkable about this is that there are times when doing well in the world, doing good for others, is both doing good for others and doing good for ourselves. Doing something which is wholesome in relationship to other people brings healthy feelings, qualities, and characteristics in ourselves, and at the same time benefits others in various ways. When they need compassion, we're meeting with compassion. When their communities are divided, we're talking in ways that unify. When people are experiencing a lot of animosity, we're bringing kindness and goodwill.

So, the idea that this wonderful dual kind of inside-outside way works—and maybe it's always this way. But if we're sitting and meditating, we're not so much aware of how the state that we're cultivating and developing in mindfulness meditation is not only good for ourselves, but also good for others. To keep this in mind is to see the dual nature of it, to appreciate more deeply that we may do this practice of mindfulness not only for our own benefit, but also for the benefit of others. It's connecting us to what is wholesome, and with that connection, of course, we'll do well for others.

So maybe this dual nature of a wholesome way of being, a skillful way of being, is inspiring us to be more interested in just staying present here. Enter into, dive into, your direct experience here and now. It's diving in, plunging in, really giving yourself over to the place where sensations and awareness meet. Really being deep in your body. This is where we start discovering the dual nature of how we are, that benefits both self and others.

So, assume a meditation posture. In the posture that maybe—not exactly like this—but if you're sitting with someone at their bedside when they're quite sick, and they're looking upon you with hope and need and pain, you might be a little bit careful about your posture. You might want to have a posture that's not assertive, but also not held back. You're clearly there with them. It's a posture that both supports your attention and brings attention to them. That benefits them.

So, be careful with your posture when you sit down to meditate. Gently close your eyes, and without much else, check in with yourself. How are you? Can you be aware of how you are right now in a way that's wholesome, a way that's supportive, in a way that is a kind of medicine for yourself? A caring attention.

And how are you with your breathing? Without meditating with your breath yet, just how is your breathing? Is there any emotion or concern, or way that you've been, that is evident in the way that you're breathing? Can you be aware of that kindly, compassionately, caringly, not making anything a problem, not making anything a project? Just know how it is.

And might you settle into your body so that your body, your torso, your diaphragm, your belly, your lungs somehow receive, somehow hold, make room for the experience of breathing. Breathing in. Breathing out. And just like a wholesome state can be beneficial for oneself and others at the same time, is that dual nature available in breathing? Where being aware of breathing, feeling the sensations of breathing, is wholesome for yourself and beneficial for your breathing.

Maybe an attitude that's reassuring for yourself and your breathing, to simply be here, present, in a deep, caring way, to the present moment. Inspired that giving yourself over to the present moment in a caring way is cultivating in you a healthy way of being with others. The benefits will come later in your interpersonal lives, and you don't have to think about it. Give yourself over to the wholesome nature, wholesome way of attending, caring, accompanying your breathing.

And after these minutes of meditating, can you sense within you a way in which being settled, or calm, or mindful is beneficial for yourself, is wholesome and healthy, and would be a source for behaving in the world, conducting yourself in the world, in a way that is wholesome for others, supportive for others, caring for others? Is there a way in which you can—something you can tap into at the end of a meditation—that can be the source of being wholesome with yourself and wholesome with others?

And in getting ready to end the sitting, turn yourself inside out, so you're gazing upon the

world. Gazing upon the world from sensitivity, from deep within, gazing upon the world kindly, meeting the world with wholesome eyes. Let that gaze be like a light that shines out upon the world, a light that's filled with care and goodwill, that expresses:

May all beings be happy. May all beings be safe. May all beings be peaceful. May all beings be free.

Thank you.