

Tuesday Morning Guided Meditation

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September 08, 2026

Keywords: samādhi, simplification, tension, awareness, breathing, wholesome, well-being, meditation

I've spoken a few times now about the practice being a process of simplification. The flip side of that, that comes along with it, is a process of less tension, moving from more stressful states to ones that are less stressful, less tension. And this gets to be fairly subtle with time, where the words tension or stress might seem too coarse. It might feel more like a very gentle feeling of, "It's a little bit too much work, a little bit too unnecessary effort."

And then the wisdom of knowing what little bit of effort to keep going, and what to let go of, what to let fade away. To have a sense, feeling for what is wholesome to do and supportive. What is the inviting inspection? What's the call here? Stay with this.

And sometimes, with the practice of *samādhi*, the practice of, dare I say, falling in love with the object of attention, that sometimes that is a wonderful way to stop feeding tension, pressure, preoccupations, thoughts. And they just kind of can sometimes fade away on their own or recede into the background. No longer become an issue because the mind is getting absorbed in something healthy and good.

And sometimes in practice, it's just obvious and easy to relax, let go. And sometimes, as practice, even that feels like too much. That feels kind of coarse. And sometimes, staying quietly present and seeing clearly what's happening, things let go of themselves. Tension releases itself without your agency or your choice or your doing it. All you did was just be present, feel it, know it well, feel it well.

So here and now, this being the beginning of a meditation session, if it feels okay with you, you can consciously relax a bit. Maybe on the exhale, maybe softening the belly. Relaxing the belly, maybe relaxing the sides of the waist, maybe relaxing the tops of the thighs, releasing a bit there. Maybe there's a little softening in the shoulders. Maybe with a fine, refined sensitivity to the muscles of the face, as you exhale, a softening of the face.

And then a similar refined sensitivity to feel if there are any tensions, contractions, pressure associated with your thinking mind. Taking a little bit of time to allow it to be there, so you can feel it where it is, how it is. And then, if it's easy, on the exhale, relax the thinking mind.

The relaxing of the thinking mind is something some people find easier with the image of waves on top of a lake. And as the waves settle and recede into the lake, so the lake surface gets still and quiet. And there's a sense that the water spreads out horizontally in all directions. So, relaxing the tensions of the mind, so maybe the mind gets broader, wider, softer.

And then taking a few moments to feel something in your back, the upper back, the spine as it moves with breathing, the back rib cage. It's usually a place where there's not a lot of sensations. And then, as if you're coming in from the back door, gently, quietly, move your attention from the back to where you normally would feel your breathing. So you're approaching breathing quietly, peacefully.

And might there be a way on the exhale to relax the awareness into the breathing, as if awareness could rest on the rising inhale and the receding exhale? And noticing the sensations that the body experiences as you breathe. Noticing how the sensations of breathing occur, appear, and disappear with no need for the label "breathing." In a way, the word "breathing" is a little extra to simply knowing the sensations in their simplicity.

And in sensing the sensations of breathing, there's the soft interface between sensing and sensations. Can't quite pull sensations away from the sensing, sensing from the sensations. But they're not quite the same either. Something happens in that relationship between sensing and sensations. That maybe has a tenderness or a spaciousness that allows the two to arise together.

And as you sense sensations of breathing, are any of those sensations, any part of the breathing, any place where you're breathing, is there pleasure? Is it pleasant? Comforting? Or maybe deeper than pleasant, is there some place in the breathing sensations that feels right, right for here, where attention can rest? This is the resting place.

This is where it feels as if the place to feel, see how sensations arise into awareness. A place to rest awareness on the breathing, so that it can be the gathering place for all of your faculties of attention. If there's knowing, there's knowing the sensations. If there's sensing, there's sensing sensations. If the quiet, clear mind is observing, it's observing the sensations. If there is a gentle intention, the intention is to be present for breathing, an orientation to be with breathing.

If there are thoughts, maybe they can be soft and gentle, and be thoughts which also are

oriented towards the present-moment breathing. Gentle thoughts, quiet thoughts that offer some guidance for an intimacy with breathing, entering into the world of breathing. The gathering around breathing, the sensations, includes how the wider body around breathing is available, receptive to be influenced by the breathing, to receive any calming influence, any enlivening influence of well-being or pleasure.

Letting the thinking mind become quieter, so the field of awareness can be more filled with the experience of breathing. So there's more room to feel whatever's pleasant about breathing. Whatever's ever whatever's pleasant in the interface of awareness and breathing. And gently, lovingly, stay there with a full exhale, seeing the exhale to the end, being available for the inhale, and receiving the inhale all the way to the end.

Oh.

With breathing as the center, a gathering place of all things, your pure peripheral awareness, the broader, wider awareness around the breathing. If there's any pleasure, well-being, goodness, peacefulness around the edges of breathing, beyond the edges, let that be known and felt. Maybe with the rhythm of breathing, gently spreading, massaging the well-being, the peace, the calm through your body.

If you're asserting yourself to be with the breathing, that might be extra work. If instead, perhaps you can allow the sensations of breathing, the whole gathering to the experience of breathing, be a gentle pull on the awareness to rest here. Open here.

Oh.

Whistling.

Oh. Yeah. Hmm. Oh. Oh.

For today, there won't be a bell ending the sitting. For those of you who have work meditation at this next work-walking period, it is now 9:05. And you're welcome to otherwise end the sitting when you would like.