

Friday Morning Guided Meditation

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September 11, 2026

Keywords: Vipassanā, Third Foundation of Mindfulness, non-contention, awareness, stillness, greed, ill will, meditation realizations

When I first was introduced to *Vipassanā*, it was in a small monastery in Thailand, and I was there for ten weeks practicing. During that time, at some point, there came a visiting monk through, and it was said that he was very deeply practiced at some of the highest meditation realizations, meditation states that were known in Buddhism. I didn't know what to make of the claims or these states. And then I met him and was able to look into his eyes. I'd never seen someone whose eyes were so deep, so clear, and just—looking into those eyes, the clarity, the steadiness, the stability. I kind of, well, maybe it's true that he has something.

So I asked him, “In your years of practice, what have you learned? How have you been changed?” Then he answered. His answer was, “He'd learned non-contention.” Non-contention.

So, what I introduced last night with the *Third Foundation of Mindfulness*—to know the mind with some challenge, something that's difficult—it's possible to practice having no contention with it, no opposition. No for or against. To know it in a very simple way. It's a mind with the challenge. In the natural unfolding of you in this life, in the natural unfolding of the universe, in this eon, there's a mind that has greed, and it's known without any contention.

Some of you probably didn't even realize that when you looked deep into space, into the night sky, saw a star, that you looked upon it without any contention. There's probably no protest, no trying to rearrange the sky. That star is in the wrong place. And in these powers of ten that we go inward, find ourselves. The star of the moment can be your ill will. It can be your fear. It can be a thought, a fantasy, a preference. It can be a contention.

But to see it as a star, to see it: this is a mind with a fantasy. This is a mind with preference. This is a mind with contention. And what becomes important is not what you're knowing.

What's important is how you know it. To know without contention, without contraction. To know without resistance.

To know that the mind is so much greater than the details of the moment, the star of the moment, just like the night sky is so vast, so much bigger than any individual star. And as you sit in this period of meditation, in the vast sky of your awareness, if around your body you feel the space and spaciousness of this room, or more simply, just that space which is just beyond the edges of your body. Or you feel the spaciousness in your body, something like space or spaciousness, and it's kind of like it's inseparable from awareness, in some kind of knowing, some kind of feeling, sensing, some kind of awareing. There's no difference, just like there's no separation between sensing and sensations. There's no separation from space, spaciousness, and awareness of it.

Similarly, to stillness, to feel to whatever degree, however small. To feel the stillness that's here, maybe deep in the body, deep in the heart, maybe deep in the mind. Maybe a stillness that coexists with what is not still, but where what is not still doesn't eclipse the stillness. Maybe there's a stillness just beyond the edges of your body. Maybe your body is a globe with sensations, surrounded by the stillness of space, where there's a kind of awareness that shares the characteristics of space. Stillness, silence that has no contention, like the night sky doesn't protest the star.

And letting the knowing be simple, maybe with less work, less you doing the knowing, and more noticing, seeing, feeling the present-moment knowing of experience. That comes naturally, easily, if the light is on. And if there's any challenge that arises for you in the mind, to know this is a mind with this challenge. And it's enough to be that simple, to know it like that.

Open up wide the awareness, so that what's happening in you and your thoughts and feelings can happen in vast space. Not leading into it, leaning into it, not resisting, not defining yourself by ruminating about it. Just vast space, the vast mind, with all kinds of things passing through. The mind has lots of visitors. That's all.

With non-contention, recognize the parts of the whole as parts, and in a certain way, the whole is what is held in the field of awareness. Each thing that arises, the simple phenomena, simple star appearing in the night sky. No need to contend with it, pick it up, react. But if there's a reaction, how wide can you make your mind? Make your awareness so you're not caught in it. And you don't contend with it.

The ability to know awareness, the mind, and the detail of what arises in it is part of the

simplification process of this practice. When things are part of a complicated story, if things are part of a bigger generalization, bigger concepts, you're less likely to see the details, the uniqueness of each moment of experience. To see each thing that arises, each sensation, each thought, each event, as its own sparkling star. If I sit here and am aware of myself as a meditator, that's a very broad abstraction, very far removed from the particular sensation of my hands touching the legs, sensations of warmth, a little movement in the belly as I breathe. A particular feeling of desire, resistance, judgment.

To stay close to the place where you can see that each thing does arise before it becomes generalized, before it's placed in a story. Here and now, the thing that arises, just a sparkling star. Here for a moment, gone. And in this simplicity, your mind might realize there's no need to be contentious about anything. Each thing, each star, is allowed to be itself. May you enjoy this day.