

Friday Morning Guided Meditation

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So I'll say a few words before I do a lightly guided meditation. The Buddha said, "You know, I teach one thing, and one thing only: suffering and the end of suffering." And my husband added, "And, you know, thirty-odd-something more lists." And here we are with the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, and it's twenty-one exercises.

That makes a pretty busy sitting if we do them. But they aren't meant to turn meditation into an excavation job, searching through experience, trying to find everything on the list. They only point us to what we might otherwise not see. And as we become more familiar with them, we begin to just notice them, just simply see what's here, and they naturally show up. We don't have to go searching for them.

A little bit like this: a close friend of mine was pregnant. She was very involved in my life, and I was going to be really a part of this whole process in that friendship. And all of a sudden, I started noticing every pregnant woman everywhere. The mind just got facilitated to that. It got sensitized to that.

And in the same way, when we do these exercises where we spend a little bit of time really giving attention, extra attention, to *vedanā*, to pleasant and unpleasant, then when it shows up in our practice, we recognize it. We see it. And especially with *vedanā*, it is so essential to this practice because that's where we cling. It helps us see exactly how clinging and resistance happen.

We're sitting there peacefully, minding our own breath, and we notice this nice little pleasant state, and we've got one more of it. Or it could be something on the outside, the wonderful waft of food from downstairs, and suddenly we're clinging. Or a beautiful meditation is disturbed by the noise from outside, the cutting-a-tree noise, maybe, and suddenly we're aversive. But we can see that unpleasantness first, and if we see that, that's the process of

clinging right there. Freedom can be had right at the moment between unpleasant and aversion.

And the same thing as we practice with the hindrances, and we give them a little bit of extra attention for a while. As we sit, we're not hypervigilant over the hindrances, but naturally we begin to notice when something gets in the way of our clear seeing. And with the third foundation, mind states, we become aware of the overall quality of our minds. We become aware of whether it's entangled or free, contracted or open. It's not that hard to see that quality of the mind if we just start tuning ourselves to it. And are we scattered or collected?

And how deeply these states can affect us depends on whether or not they're being seen. When we're practicing with a contracted mind and not seeing that, that's when we start to strive, and we start tensing our brow or tensing our eyes. But allow it to be seen. Ah, it's a contracted mind, a mind with contraction, and just allowing it to soften a little bit. Not making it a project, but just allowing it to soften, to be seen.

And all these exercises point to something quite simple: opening to what's here, just what's here, seeing it more fully, allowing things to unfold just as they are. And that's where we can clearly see when there is *dukkha* and when there is freedom. So let's begin. I'll guide the first part of this.

Settling in, connecting with the body. This body here, connecting with experience of this body breathing. And as we breathe, we can be aware that the air outside of our body is the same air inside of our body. Breathing in. Breathing out. There's no separation between inside and outside.

Breathing inside, outside, flowing back and forth, connected by breathing. We can become aware of a wider sense of feeling the whole body, the global body, as if the whole body is breathing. Sensing the body, the sensations in the body, calming anything that needs to be calmed, just allowing experience to show itself.

If something pleasant arises, it can simply be known. If there's resistance, that can be known. If the mind is settled, that can be known. Thoughts may arise. Movements of the mind may arise. In this wide field of awareness, they too can arise and pass away.

There's room for all of it. And when calm, steadiness, joy, equanimity, when they are present, perhaps simply knowing them, appreciating them, recognizing them. And perhaps notice if clinging arises—that small movement of the mind of wanting something to continue, of wanting something to be different, or something to go away. Simply know it, and with that seeing, allowing it to release itself.

Seeing clearly what's here—that's enough. And in seeing clearly, sometimes something lets go. A little less holding. A little less suffering. A little more freedom. Opening to what's here.

Trusting the simplicity of presence, allowing experience to be known, and wherever there can be letting go, letting go. Uh-huh. Thank you.