

Tuesday Morning Guided Meditation

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I would like to bring back an image from earlier in the retreat of the preschool classroom. The preschool kids are running around, being, some people would say, crazy in all the ways they can play and be. And when the time is ready for something else, the teacher would stand in the middle of the classroom and be very still, quiet for a while, and then would quietly start telling a story. And as the kids picked this up, they slowly started to be pulled close to him and sit down on the floor around him and listen to the story. And the whole classroom was no longer crazy. It was still and quiet, attentive.

So this flat practice of the meeting place, or the combination of abiding and movement, a certain kind of dynamic stillness and movement. Perhaps when you first sit down, sometimes, and you find a place of inner stillness, stability. Maybe a stillness and stability that even has some quiet thoughts or understanding of what it's doing. Maybe inviting all the chatter and agitation that's built up to come gather, or maybe the whole system around feels a gravitational pull to that stillness. And things begin to gather, come closer, not spin outward so much. The thoughts don't take us out of ourselves, but everything begins to return together into the stillness, slowly, peacefully.

Where your job is simply to be the quiet place in the middle, that's aware and still, welcoming. Sometimes, if there's a particular part of you that's particularly activated, maybe place yourself in the middle of that. Find the midpoint. And let that be the center of stillness that sees and is present. And the gathering together might, at some point, create a feeling of unification or warmth, maybe coziness. Maybe a feeling that things are slowly flowing within you, and the agitated movements that have their source in the surface mind morph into a more enjoyable flow of movement, also flowing around or together with the inner stillness, the quieter quiet, the beautiful witnessing.

Where that gentle awareness of both stillness and movement is not something that you can fixate on. It doesn't make sense to bore into any of it, hold on to any of it. Awareness itself flows. Knowing flows. Seeing is a soft, floating feeling, moving somehow between the abiding stillness and the movements, the change, the flow. With an awareness that the stillness, the simple witnessing, seeing, feeling of it all, is itself not a story, not a thought. And it becomes less and less interesting to be centered in thinking. Untroubled by the thinking mind, let it recede into the background.

And if you're there, aware of both the movements, the stillness, the stillness and the movements, if there's any feeling or orientation for further settling, quieting, allow that to happen. And if there's any feeling or sense that letting go is a good thing, allow letting go. When the movements of thinking begin unknown to you, just start up. When you notice, see it as movement—maybe centrifugal movement pulling you away—and reestablish the inner stillness and quiet that welcomes everything back. To hear. The time is nine o' five.