

Guided Meditation: Thinking Beneficially

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September 29, 2026

Keywords: speech, *dharma*, *mettā*, *karuṇā*, meditation, discursive thoughts, judging thoughts, inner stillness, guided meditation

Hello from IMC. Related to the topic of today is the idea that speech, the way we speak, can be sacred or can be profound, can be phenomenally meaningful.

What we are told, how people relate to us, how we talk to other people—there's so much goodness, so much respect, love, so much *dharma*, this way of being—that can be conveyed in how we speak. And so, caring for speech is a way of caring for ourselves, caring for others, and caring for meditation.

How we speak to ourselves can be sacred, can be very meaningful. How we speak to ourselves can be an expression of love, can be an expression of *mettā* and *karuṇā*. How we speak to ourselves can be transformative.

So this week, when we're talking about speech, we can apply this to meditation as well. And can we speak to ourselves in meditation? Can we think in meditation in ways that support the meditation, not to be busy, not to get more agitated?

But the opposite: to be deeply reassuring, settling, encouraging, calming; to get us absorbed into and involved here in a deep way with the practice. And so, it's not necessary to stop thinking to meditate well, but it's certainly necessary to stop having discursive thoughts. It's certainly necessary to stop having judging thoughts.

But to give ourselves simple words, simple instructions, simple encouragement, simple questions, simple kind of reporting descriptions of what we're experiencing, is a way of really helping us get absorbed here, really connected, interested, involved. Because the idea in meditation is to get more interested in the meditation than we are interested in discursive thoughts, distracting thoughts.

And one of the ways to do this is to have a sense of purpose, to know why we're meditating. It could be as simple as we're meditating in order to become calmer, to relieve us of stress. It

could be we're meditating in order to know ourselves better, to find out what's really going on.

We're meditating better to settle all the agitation of the day, so we can feel at home here in our own skin, in our own body, in our own heart. We want to—we're sitting here so that we can have the kind of inner stillness that helps us to let go of the things we're most attached to, most clinging to, in a way that, when we're ready, we can let go.

So, to have a sense of purpose, and then to ask: What is useful for that purpose? What supports that purpose? What is beneficial?

And that can be as simple as, let me check in with myself. Let me find out what's happening here, how I am. Like my own best friend: How are you?

And then really listen, explore, feel into yourself. How are you? And given how you are, how would you support yourself to start the meditation?

Where would you have your attention? How would you have your posture? What attitude might you establish? And how could you speak to yourself with the way you speak, so it supports the purpose you have?

So, if the purpose is to be calm, how can you talk calmly about becoming calm? About where to put the attention and how to meditate very calmly, so it keeps you involved in a calming activity of meditation.

So you don't have to let go of your thoughts today. You don't have to let go of your thinking. You might stop thinking about certain things, but switch over to think about your meditation.

So you don't have to stop thinking. Just think about the right things.

So, taking a posture for meditation, one of the ways to speak to yourself is to ask simple questions for how to start, then where to put your attention, and how to be. One of the ways to start is to check in with yourself. How are you really in your body, in your mind, in your heart?

And use that as a basis for starting the meditation. So I'm going to be quiet now, so that you can provide yourself with the kind of guided meditation, guided support that I provide often at this time, and see if you can find a voice. To speak it well, to do well for you.

If you think more in images, maybe you can bring up images that support the meditation. If you're with your breathing, it could be an image of a jellyfish propelling itself through the

water, opening and closing, or a large, soaring bird that gently dips its wings up and down as you breathe.

So, with that, I'll be quiet. May you be your own teacher today, for your meditation practice.

Oh. As we come to the end of this sitting, spend another minute or so seeing if you can speak in ways that are beneficial for you. Speak to yourself with not necessarily wishing yourself well, but just simple recognition of what's happening with a calm, centered voice.

Simple questions about how you are. Simple instructions of how to be that are not idealistic or imposing something on yourself, but seem to come from deep within. How you'd most want to be is what is most sincere for you.

And then to turn your attention out into the world. In what way can you think about the world around you with a kind voice, a gentle voice, a calming voice? What way can you wish well unto others?

What way can you see them, that if they knew that you were thinking of them that way, they would be happy, relieved, gladdened? And may it be that this practice we do prepares us to walk into the world in ways that support others, that support their happiness and well-being.

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

Thank you.