

Guided Meditation: Deep Thinking

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So, hello and welcome. The teachings I'm offering this week for meditation might come as a surprise to some of you. That is, to engage with thinking while you meditate, rather than trying to stop thinking.

Some people, even very experienced meditators, find this kind of an unthinkable proposal. When they really get into meditation, it feels like they're not thinking at all. I don't want to disagree with that, but there are layers of thinking within us, and those layers go to subtler, subtler, calmer, calmer ways of thinking. Until, at some point, the thinking, the use of intelligence, recognition, figuring things out, are operating on almost a subverbal level, and we don't have to actively think about it. We don't have to plan ahead.

We know what to do if we're walking down a sidewalk in a street and we see a group of people coming towards us. There might not have to be any conscious thinking about it, intentional thinking about it. But maybe the right thing to do is to step to the side. Maybe the group of kids are a bunch of kindergarten kids with their teachers, and so, of course, you step aside and walk around them.

They're figuring out that this is where you walk to the side. This is how you do it. This is how you slow down and make room for them. All that calculation happens subvocally, below the level of thinking, but still the mind is figuring that out.

So, as we get deeper in meditation, we're still engaging something that's right there on the interface and the, oh, maybe the gray zone between nonverbal and verbal thinking, active thinking, and this kind of deeper intelligence. It's a whole different layer of thinking than discursive thinking and calculated thinking. To know about this and appreciate it, and to have a way of just allowing for it and slightly intending it: "Yes, stay here, stay here." To learn how to do it in a way that really supports the meditation, that it is meditative.

One of the ways to do that is to be in time with the present moment. Be in time. “In time” here, I think, is a musical term: to be with the beat, to be with, in the middle of, the time. The only living time that we can directly experience is now, here. To be in time is to be here in this time, and then moving through the present-moment time wisely.

One of the wise ways to do it is to allow thinking to become slower. To have thinking that is almost like a sentence that then pauses to make room to experience. So, it could be a simple, even a word. I like using the word “here.” It's a kind of a thought.

But I say it calmly, slowly, and when I finish saying it, it's like a beginning of a journey: “Here.” Then, silently, I open to feel and sense: what is thinking? What is happening here for me? What's my direct experience?

And that part is kind of silent, in the way that sensing through the body is a silent awareness. Then I might say “here” again. Sometimes I use the word “now,” and sometimes I use the word “yes.” That also is kind of this: “Oh, yes.”

And then, what is it I'm saying yes to here? To experience and feel. It doesn't really matter if it's pleasant or unpleasant. It's just like, “Yes, let me be with this. Let me recognize it, experience it.”

The idea is to do that, to know something about doing this in time, in a slow time, in a time that's spacious, open, not in a hurry. A time that supports a settling, a calming, a quieting. Sometimes the subtle thoughts might almost feel like it's not you thinking them, but it's not not you either. But you're there to kind of, “Yes, explore this, feel this. Yes, let the subtle thing happen here in my belly. Yes, this is good.”

One of the reasons to do this is because the alternative to somehow engaging thinking is to leave your thinking idle. An idle mind gets in trouble. It wanders off so easily into something else and takes you away.

So, to assume a meditation posture. To be in a posture that somehow brings your whole body, as much as you can, into time, into this time. Almost like you're stepping into a place and you're really inhabiting the place. To inhabit this time, now, as if your body is participating in time.

Another meaning of “in time” is you fit the schedule. You came in time for something that's beginning. So, to recognize with your whole posture that you're in time, just in time for the present moment. To appreciate that, to kind of be delighted: “I'm in time for now.”

So that it just is a kind of beginning of a certain delight to be here and present. And gen-

tly closing your eyes, and then continuing for the rest of the sitting with me being silent, as you guide yourself gently, lovingly, into the present moment. Into a deeper and deeper experience of yourself, with thoughts that support this quieting and calming, deepening and deepening. And from time to time, this is our way of thinking that will, in fact, bring you to the end of thinking.

A great support for meditation is to find the way to be untroubled by whatever is happening while you meditate, untroubled by any thoughts you have or feelings you have. A way to find that is that deeper, quieter place of thinking that is not identified with what's happening, not defined by what's happening. It doesn't react to what's happening. It's a quiet, contented place deep inside that knows, that sees, that has simple thoughts of recognition, while not being pushed around or impacted by whatever is happening.

There is an English expression: "Take time for something." Take time for a deeper connection to the present moment. Deep meaning from a deep, quiet place within to know, to sense, and to even think about the present-moment experience without lingering with the present moment that has passed.

And as we come to the end of this sitting, to have some very quiet, as peaceful as possible thoughts about the world beyond where you reside now, where you're sitting, into the world around you—the people, the animals, the environment. And to gaze upon it, to think about it, from that deeper place inside that is untroubled, that peacefully knows, peacefully is aware of the ways you are troubled. It's okay. But there is a deeper place that can say that it's okay.

From here, we can think about it. We can know it. Gaze upon it without reacting, without being agitated, without closing down. We can think about it from here, without identifying with it, defining ourselves by it, without referring it back to ourselves.

And to gaze and to think about the wider world from this place, and from there to wish it well. To have maybe a great wish that there be peace, that there be respect and kindness, that we live together with generosity and mutual positive regard. And to gaze upon the world with this care, and to let these sentiments, these desires, live in you for a few moments, so they might endure. Maybe even in surprisingly unexpected ways within you as you go through the day.

May all beings be happy. May all beings be peaceful. May all beings be safe. May all beings be free, and may these wishes live in me today, so that some way or other I can

act on them. May all beings be happy.

Thank you.