

Guided Meditation: Problem Free Zone

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Hello and welcome. So, in this meditation, I'd like to refer back to something from my childhood that made an impression on me. I was growing up in Europe, and I learned that there was a custom that, if someone was in trouble with the law, they could go into a church and have sanctuary there. They were out of reach of the state, the police, whatever it was. It was a safe place to be.

This idea that there are places in the world we can go where we're safe from something then stayed with me as a kind of wonderful reference point. So it came to meditation: that meditation is the place that we're safe. It doesn't have to be that way. You can certainly think about all kinds of things that make it dangerous for you. But there's the option to see it as a very special place, as a sanctuary where, during this time, you're allowed to drop, put aside blame, guilt, ambition, past, future. This is the place where you're safe.

You're out of reach of all those movements of the mind. Here, you're safe. One of the things you're safe from is having to consider, be involved in, figure out, or respond to any problems you have in the wider world. When you sit down to meditate and close your eyes, this is a sanctuary. This is a time to—you have much more, much better things to do than to consider your problems. Not that your problems don't need to be addressed.

I hope that they can be addressed better after meditation, from what happens in meditation. But there's another opportunity here in meditation to tap into, touch into some sanctuary, some deeper source within, some deeper sense of peace, well-being, some clear sense of who we are. It is a place where we're not carrying any problems, any anxieties, any issues that we have to address or think about or solve. And I know that this is a difficult task, but simply to be told that that's possible—that this can be your sanctuary—and, from a deeper connection to oneself, a deeper wholeness with oneself, trust that you'll be in a much better

position to deal with and respond to the so-called problems, the concerns, the issues of your life afterwards. Much better than if you spend that meditation thinking about those things.

So welcome to this time of sanctuary, this time of safety. At least, to be safe from yourself, from the way you think and react and tighten up. And of course, you'll do all those things, but you can lovingly remind yourself, "It's okay. This is okay." Don't make a problem out of the mind that makes problems. Just reassure it, settle it, quiet.

So, gently closing your eyes, where the closed eyes are a transition into the sanctuary, into this new space, and a reminder that this is a new space you enter into, a safe space. Just to really be established here, take some larger breaths, expanding the chest, the belly, and a long exhale, settling in here. Breathing in, and with a long exhale, imagining, maybe even visualizing in some way, all the things that you're shedding, falling away for this meditation. So you can just be here in this refuge, sanctuary, peaceful place.

Touching into what is deeper in you than your problems, your fears. Tapping into what's deep, and maybe the place of depth where you are untroubled. And from there, breathe and be present in your body. Remind yourself that these minutes meditating are a time to have no problems. Nothing is a problem. You can say, "It's okay."

Remind yourself you have better things to do right now than thinking about your challenges. Even your challenges with meditation.

And as we come to the end of this sitting, if this idea of sitting and meditation as a sanctuary has had any value for you—some place, some way that you sat here, meditated even for a few minutes, as a problem-free zone, just being here, simple and safe from problems, troubles, blames and guilts, worries—maybe not fully, but to the degree to which you could do this, imagine seeing others this way. Imagine seeing others without any notion that they are a problem or they present problems, or that they give you cause for fear, blame, or that you blame them. Anger—that you, for a few minutes, can be a sanctuary for others. They come to you and they're safe.

Nothing to worry about. Whatever their problems are, whatever their challenges are, whatever their guilts are and worries, at least for you, you are the sanctuary. You are willing to be with them for some minutes, as if they do not represent any problem. This is a problem-free zone. And in doing this, maybe it gives more room for you to have goodwill, kindness, care for them. And maybe, just maybe, you can expand the circle of your sanctuary, the circle of your care and kindness, out into the world.

Everyone needs this. May all beings be happy. May all beings be safe. May all beings be

peaceful. May all beings be free. And may I be a refuge.

May each of us be a refuge for others, so they have a better chance to experience for themselves happiness, safety, peace, and freedom. May all beings be free. Thank you.