Guided Meditation: Calm Orientation

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Hello and welcome to this meditation. And today, this week, a lot of the meditation is focused on breathing, awareness of breathing, mindfulness of breathing in different ways. And I would like to continue that today.

But today I want to emphasize certainly being present for breathing, but to do so by reorienting the mind. There's a part of the mind that operates from contraction, from tightness, from pressure, maybe from fear, anxiety, maybe desires, maybe stories and preoccupations that involve somehow a tightening or a condensing or solidification of something that we call the mind. For some people, it's kind of in the frontal part of the mind. And for some people, it can feel like the place where thinking arises, if there's an inner voice, where the voice speaks. Or, if it's images, where the images either appear or from the projector from which they're projected.

And focusing on the breathing activates that place, and there's more control of the breath. There's more trying to be present for breath from the very place in the mind that tends to spin out in thoughts. So, if that's the place of the mind we're using, it's easier to kind of just be involved in either thinking about something else or thinking about the breathing, what should happen, in a way that doesn't allow us to be really kind of linked to the breath or joining the breath from the mind.

So, for some of you, it might work to feel where your center of gravity is in the mind and to shift your attention to some place in the mind that's further back in the mind, or deeper underneath the mind, or deeper in the center of it—some different place that is not associated with thinking, with wanting, with fear, with contraction, with searching, or trying to understand or trying to do. Find that different place in the mind—a different center, a different focus. It might be the back of the mind.

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Sometimes with the eyes, we're kind of so focused forward-looking, forward into the future, forward into the present. But to let the eyes rest, to let the perception and the mind rest, that's to a place in the mind that's not so busy or active, and orient the awareness from there. Let that be the kind of way to organize awareness, organize your mind in a wider, softer way, in order to connect with the breathing.

And imagine it's like a kite on a long string. And as the winds move back and forth, as the breathing rises and passes, inhales and exhales, that's like the gentle wind which is blowing the kite. And a good kite operator keeps the string of the kite taut. You can't pull it too tight, and you pull it out of the sky. You can't keep it too loose, or then maybe the kite will fall. Just the right tautness to stay, kind of have fun with the kite and enjoy it and be with it.

But there has to be that kind of kite-like attention in terms of the kite, the hands and the right tautness there. So, in that back of the mind, that new orientation place, just the right tautness to stay with a whole inhale, and then the wind changes and stay with a whole exhale. So, assuming a meditation posture, gently closing the eyes, refamiliarizing yourself with your breathing and how it feels for your torso, your body to be breathing, or if you're aware of the breathing in your nostril, what it's like there right now.

On the exhale, softening your body. On the exhale, calming your body—a calming wave spreading through the body—and as you exhale, softening the mind, calming the mind, sending a wave of calming through the mind. And then sitting quietly, a quiet mind if you can. For just a few breaths—three or four or five—to connect to your breathing, a soft connection.

And as you're aware of breathing, maybe directing the mind to the breath. What in your mind is activated for mindfulness of breathing? Is there any contraction or tension or pressure coming from the mind that's either associated with breathing, mindfulness of breathing, or just associated with how your mind is right now? And then let your awareness almost like it takes two steps back, deeper into the mind, further back, deeper. To a place in the mind that has no tension or pressure associated with it.

Maybe there's very little sensation, because there's just quiet peace, spaciousness, somehow associated with the mind. Let your breathing breathe into that place, through that place, accompanying that place as you exhale, relaxing into that place where the mind is spacious and calm. Maybe still, absence of pressure. And then, from there, orient your awareness to your body breathing—a relaxed line of attention, like a soft thread that's connected to a kite.

Where the body breathing is the kite, and gently, without any tension, but keep a kind of soft

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tautness, soft continuity of attention from this peaceful place in the mind, around which the mind is organized to be with breathing. Softly and continuously, like a kite flyer would feel the tautness of the string without getting tense. Stay there quietly with the breathing.

Giving yourself over to a peaceful orientation of the mind, oriented on breathing. A quiet place in the mind, oriented to a direct connection with the sensations of breathing, maintaining a continuity of attention. The whole inhale, the whole exhale. Like a direct line between the two, mind and breathing, around which everything else can relax and soften.

Okay. As we come to the end of the sitting, checking in with yourself to see where within your mind, your heart, your body there might be the quietest, most peaceful place. Maybe it's quite still. Maybe spacious, calm. Someplace that is distinct from where your mind contracts, the heart resists or is closed, or the body is tense, bracing itself.

Can you find a place within that might be a refuge? Be peaceful. That is a welcoming place to rest, center yourself. A place that's not associated with doing, protecting, judging, being for or against. A place of just being could be very small. That the center of all things, in the back room of your mind, and with nothing you have to do or be responsible for, or nothing that calls on you to react in any way.

From there, gaze out upon the world. From there, like sitting in a relaxed chair, gaze out across the world in whatever way your mind thinks of it—a world of suffering, a world of joy, a world of love, and a world empty of love. A world where everything is found. And from your peaceful place, for a few moments here, gazing quietly on this wide world, and to gaze with care, to gaze with love or kindness, as if love and kindness and care is the very medicine that this world needs.

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

And may we, as we go through our day, remember that kindness is the great medicine for the world. Thank you.

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