Guided Meditation: Where that Reveals

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Hello and welcome! It's very nice to be back here after being gone for a week. I had a wonderful week at the retreat center in Santa Cruz, inside retreat center teaching, and now I'm very happy to be here and coming back with some of maybe the aftereffects of the retreat.

One of the, I think, very useful ideas for doing mindfulness practice is to assume that it's less about getting answers, but more about having questions. Not any question—not intellectual questions, or scholarly questions, doctrinal questions—but rather questions that open you wide to be attentive, to discover what's here. Maybe questions that silence the mind, that don't get the mind thinking about what the answer might be, and questions which guide awareness, maybe, to be present, to be awake, to be centered here and now in the present-moment experience.

And one of those questions is to ask yourself, and this is whatever is happening for you in your direct experience, whatever is happening here and now, in how you experience here and now, in how there's embodied lived experience of here and now: Where is that experience in you? If it's listening to a sound like my voice, where do you experience it? Is it mostly in the ears? Is it somewhere else?

If you're with your breathing, where do you experience your breathing? And maybe asking that question, "Where is breathing?" has you quietly, with a quiet mind, sensing through your body for how the body experiences breathing. If you're having some strong emotion, not what is the emotion, not why is the emotion, but rather, where is it being experienced in the body? Is it mostly in your thoughts, mostly in your heart, mostly in your belly? Where is it?

If you have a lot of thinking, not asking what are you thinking, why are you thinking, but rather, where is that thinking occurring in you? What has activated within you when you're

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involved in thinking? What sensations? What energies? What feelings? What agitation? What sense of pressure, contraction? What leaning forward or pulling back? Where are all those things?

And then, to quietly, without a lot of thought, let the body feel, sense the here and now of what you're experiencing. And the question "where" guides us. It guides attention to where to wake up, where to attend, where to be with attention—a quiet attention, attention that doesn't solve anything, or try to fix anything, or understand anything. Endeavors which are useful in some areas of life, but for the purpose of settling into here and now, in our embodied contemplative meditative mode, no need for anything more but discovering where to center your attention, where to wake up.

So, gently close your eyes. And ask, "Where are you?" First, with your eyes closed, feel and sense the sensations of the location you're in—the contact, contact against your chair, your cushion, the floor. The soundscape of where you are. And in some way, where you are, where is the location that your body takes up? The space your body fills with itself.

So the "where are you" is right here in this body. To feel it and sense it with no agenda. Then, where in your body does it feel like it's home for you, or a centering place, a settling place? Where can there be a welcoming place to be aware, to be centered? Is there some place within where your mind feels safe and comfortable enough to take a rest from its thinking? Here, now.

And where inside is it simplest to experience the breathing? Where's the breathing light? Where in your body does the breathing feel useful? And as you breathe in and breathe out, stay close to wherever is peaceful, safe, home within. So whatever takes you away from here can begin to soften and relax, settling into here. Whatever thoughts want to take you away, allow something about them to come to rest here, right now.

So as we come to the end of this sitting, where within your body, your heart, your mind, do you feel most calm, most settled, most grounded? Where in your body, heart, or mind, do you feel most at ease? Most quiet. Where in your body is it most settled? To be aware, to be embodied, to be here and now.

And gently breathe with it, breathe through it. With every exhale, letting the thinking mind be reassured that it's okay for a few moments to be quiet. And then, from a subtle place, whatever degree of calm you can find within, from there gaze upon the world. Bring to mind communities around you, the people around you, out across the neighborhoods, extended areas, and wish them all well.

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Smile upon their well-being. Smile upon the possibility that today could be a good day for them. No matter what challenges they have, may it be that all beings can smile, can feel happy at heart. May all beings be safe. May all beings be peaceful. May all beings be free, and may wherever they go, be where they wake up. Thank you.

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