Forgiving Heart Meditation | Monday Night

Jack Kornfield · Notable Dhamma Teachers — Jack Kornfield · 25:26

Find a way to sit that's comfortable and stable, where there's a sense of both upright alertness and graciousness or ease. Take your seat halfway between heaven and earth in this mysterious human incarnation, sitting under your own tree of enlightenment for this time. Begin to pay attention in a deep and quiet way.

Let your eyes close gently. First, take two or three long, slow breaths to release whatever is obvious that you're holding. Bring your caring attention to your own body as you sit here halfway between heaven and earth.

Let your eyes and face be soft. Loosen the jaw. If you like, you can roll your head in a circle to release your neck and let it find a simple upright position. Relax your shoulders. Let your arms and hands rest easily.

Feel the weight of your body on your seat, your chair, your cushion, your feet. Notice how the earth beneath you completely supports you. You can relax just here and feel this support just where you are. Let your belly be soft and your breath natural. Let your heart be soft as well, ready to receive whatever arises with a spirit of kindness and tenderness.

Now, with this embodied presence, begin to notice how the body breathes itself—this mysterious inter-breathing with the ocean of air around us. Each breath you take in was breathed recently by those nearby, by the birds flying overhead and the worms in the soil. We're exchanging our breath of life with the rest of the living field of this earth.

Simply sense wherever you can—coolness in the nostrils, swirling, tingling in the back of the throat. Sense this breath, the rise and fall of chest or belly. If it's at all difficult to feel, put one hand on your belly and feel it rise and fall in the palm of your hand as you meditate. If it's helpful, with each breath you can whisper in the back of your mind: ease, calm. These words, suggested by Thich Nhat Hanh, invite the breathing to open you to quiet and center. Each simple breath.

Naturally, the attention will wander. When you notice the attention has wandered off—as soon as you're aware of it, ten seconds or two minutes later, it doesn't matter—as soon as you wake up, you recognize: oh yes, here, seated, breathing mindfully. As if to bow, acknowledge that you've been away and gently come back to the very next breath. It's this returning and redirecting over and over that begins to stabilize the sense of calm and steadiness.

No judgment. It's like training the puppy, we say. When the puppy gets up after you say "sit" and "stay" for a few seconds and runs around or pees in the corner, you clean it up. You pick the puppy up kindly and

put it back down. Sit. Stay. You don't want to beat the puppy or frighten it. You want the puppy to learn that it can rest, just as you can.

Gently, with ease, this breath. One after another.

This breath. Notice its beginning, middle, and end, the space between breaths. How it rises and falls like waves of the ocean. You become the still and quiet witness of this breath. Calm and ease.

This breath. Use a kind and tender attention.

Let the stillness and steadiness deepen.

You are becoming the loving witness, the mindful loving awareness. Rest in the present, noticing the breath, this life breath breathing itself.

And with the same mindful loving awareness, you can acknowledge where the attention gets pulled when it leaves the breath. Not to stay there, but as if to acknowledge with a bow—planning, or remembering, or sadness, or longing, or love and joy. And maybe you can even add a little thank you. Oh, planning. Thank you. And then return to the breath. Oh, remembering. Thank you. And then return to the breath. Oh, worrying. Thank you. Return to the breath. Oh, love or joy. Thank you. And return to the breath.

You are the loving awareness, the witness of the breath and the waves of experience that rise around the breath. Stay simple. Just this breath now. Or just whatever wave appears to pull you away. Thank you.

You are the loving witness, the loving awareness itself, noticing this breath. Calm. Peace. And kindness toward whatever experience gets strong around the breath. Thank you to each one. And then return to the breath.

As the stillness deepens and the sense of being the loving witness, the loving awareness itself, grows—let this loving kindness fill your being. Add in the metta, the loving kindness: as all things arise and pass, may I be filled with loving kindness. Receive them all with kindness. Safe and protected. Kind and well.

Kindness and loving awareness holding this whole body, heart and mind, this whole human life that you've been given. Tenderly. Steady, loving and deep. With every breath and every wave of experience met with loving kindness, loving awareness.

And finally, let this loving kindness and loving awareness that fills awareness itself, that fills the sky of consciousness—let it spread from you out in every direction, like a lighthouse, like a beacon, wishing calm and peace for beings everywhere. Spreading loving kindness in every direction to beings far and near.

Rest in stillness and love. Let it naturally shine forth and be present for all you touch, and out to beings everywhere.

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