Gratitude and Generosity Meditation | Monday Night

Jack Kornfield · Notable Dhamma Teachers — Jack Kornfield · 27:23

So let's begin with a meditation.

Find a way to sit that's stable and comfortable and at ease, where there's a sense of dignity to your body, some uprightness if you can, if your body allows, so that you are like the queen or the king seated on your throne in the middle of your own life. And also gracious, not rigid or tight, but rather just present with a kind and loving awareness.

When you're ready, if you're able to, let your eyes close gently and take two or three long, deep breaths to release whatever obvious tension wants to be let go of. Let the eyes and face be soft. Loosen the jaw. If you like, you can roll your head in a little circle to release your neck and let it find a simple upright position.

Let the shoulders relax and the arms and hands rest easily. Feel the weight of your body as it touches the chair, the cushion, the floor, and how the earth completely supports you. Just where you are, you can let go and be supported just now. Let the belly be soft and the breath natural. Let the heart be soft as well to receive whatever arises with a spirit of kindness and compassion.

Now bring your attention to the fact of your body's breathing and feel it wherever it's most natural to sense—coolness in the nostrils, swirling and tingling in the back of the throat, or the rise and fall of chest or belly. If it's difficult to sense, put your hand on your belly and feel it rise and fall in the palm of your hand.

As you feel your breath, quite simply, we're not trying to become good breathers or manipulate the breath, but let it breathe itself. With each breath, let there be a sense of growing ease or calm steadiness. Breathing in ease and calm. Breathing out, inviting ease and calm.

Return to the breath for now at the beginning. Whenever the attention wanders off, just come back gently and kindly to the next breath that you notice. A steadying of attention, a relaxing into the rhythm of breath. The ever-present wave of breathing invites you to relax. This breath—beginning and middle and end. The in-breath arising. The space between breaths as it turns. The next breath. Like the waves of the ocean, the breath rises and falls. Steady attention. A loving awareness to this breath.

As you feel the breath or return to it when attention wanders, the quality of presence deepens, and with it you notice what's happening—the thoughts that come and go, the feelings and emotions, the sensations and experiences of body. All of these too can be included in the meditation's mindful loving awareness.

So now shift your attention from the breath to all the sensations, the field of sensations that make up your body—the pressure and warmth or cool, the tingling, the hardness or softness, the areas of pleasure or pain, tightness, holding, throbbing. With mindful loving awareness, notice the whole field of sensations that make up your experience of this human body.

If there are areas of pain or tension that are obvious, bring the mindful loving awareness to them, as if to bow to them. Hold them with kindness. Not trying to fix them, but hold them the way you would hold a child who is going through a hard time. Notice how this kind, loving awareness allows for the tensions and knots to begin to soften and open in their own way.

And now, as an expression of gratitude, as if you could make a bow to your own body, say thank you. Thank you for carrying so much, for holding so much as I move through the days and nights. Your body carries so much. Thank you. You can relax. I'm okay just now. You can relax.

Let your body know you're okay just here and now. You can relax. Allow an opening of presence to deepen. Feel the breath breathe itself again for some breaths.

Now bring your attention to the area of your heart—the heart that carries so much. Yes, the physical heart, but much more the heart of feeling, of emotion. Notice all that your heart has been carrying: longings and fear, great love, worry, frustration, excitement, sweetness, sadness, appreciation, doubt, deep love—all carried by this heart, this very human heart.

With mindful loving awareness, just notice how much your heart feels and carries. Notice what's especially strong for it now. Hold it all with tenderness, with loving awareness. As if you could bow to your heart inwardly, say thank you. Gratitude. Thank you for caring so much, for caring so much, for trying to help and protect me. Thank you, dear heart, for all you carry. I'm okay just now. Thank you for trying to help me in all these ways. I'm okay just here and now. You can relax. You can rest. Let your heart be at ease.

Notice the breath again, naturally breathing, each breath caring for your life.

Now, with the same mindful loving awareness, notice your mind—the mind that produces a stream of words and thoughts and pictures and images, plans and memories. The busy mind that keeps active, thinking and imagining, analyzing, remembering, on and on and on like a stream. The mind moving, moving, with all these thoughts and images and pictures and words and plans and memories and ideas. Feel the energy of the mind: creative, sometimes obsessed, analyzing, exploring, opening.

Again, as if you could inwardly bow to your mind, say thank you. Thank you for working so hard to take care of me, to protect me. Worrying and planning and figuring it out. Thank you for trying to protect me. I'm so grateful. Thank you, mind. Hold it with tender compassion—this mind works so hard. Say, thank you, I'm okay just now. You can relax. I'm okay just here. Rest in the quiet heart and the breath.

Finally, notice that just as you can bow to your body and say thank you for caring so much, for trying to keep me safe and well—just as you can bow to your heart, thank you for carrying all these feelings and cares, trying to protect me, care for me—just as you can bow to your busy mind, thank you for trying to figure it out, to keep me safe, to help me—notice that you are not your body. You're not your feelings. You're not your thoughts and images.

You are the loving witness. You are consciousness itself. You are the loving awareness that acknowledges the body, the heart, the mind. Relax into loving awareness. You are the silent, vast witness to it all. Breaths and sensations rise and pass like waves of the ocean. Feelings and thoughts come and go. And you are the loving stillness, the mindful loving awareness—your own true nature. You are consciousness itself, witnessing, allowing, receiving it all in the vast stillness.

You are loving awareness. Rest in it.

Trust it.

It is your home.

When you're ready, let your eyes open and remain connected to the stillness. Remain connected to the deep understanding that you are consciousness itself—witnessing and experiencing this remarkable human life.

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