Opening the Heart Meditation | Monday Night

Jack Kornfield · Notable Dhamma Teachers — Jack Kornfield · 27:03

Find yourself a way to sit that is stable and comfortable and at ease, and at the same time has some sense of alertness and presence. In this posture and in this place, settle yourself. If you're able and comfortable, let your eyes close gently, or at least lower your gaze. Let's begin with some meditation together.

With your eyes closed gently, take two or three long breaths to begin to release whatever's being carried that can be let go of easily. Let yourself settle here on the earth. Let your eyes and face be soft. Loosen the jaw. If you like, you can roll your head in a little bit of a circle to release your neck and let it find a simple upright. Let the shoulders relax. The arms and hands rest easily.

Feel the weight of your body on the cushion or floor beneath you and how the earth can completely support you. You can let go and feel fully supported just where you are. Let the belly be soft and the breath natural. And let the heart be soft as well, to receive whatever arises with a spirit of kindness and compassion.

Now, with this embodied presence, begin to notice with loving awareness how the body breathes itself. Just now, this breath. You might feel it in the nostrils—the swirling, tingling in the back of the throat, coolness in the nostrils. You might feel the breath as a rise and fall of chest or belly. Feel how the body breathes itself in this ocean of air that we all share together. Relax with each breath. Invite a sense of calm and ease, breathing in and breathing out.

As you feel the breath, let the other experiences of sounds and thoughts and emotions and sensations rise and fall like waves of the ocean around the breath. Let your attention, your loving awareness, return again and again just to this moment, breathing in and out with ease, inviting calm, steady.

When you notice the attention moves from the breath, very gently, when you're aware you've gone off, bring it back to the next breath kindly—like training the puppy, our image. Sit, stay. Over and over until the puppy settles down, and the attention too will settle down. Sit, stay. You don't need to hit the puppy or get angry. Very kindly say, sit, this breath, and invite presence.

You're not trying to become a good breather. Let the breath be short or long, whatever it wants to do. The attention to the breath, this mindful loving awareness of this breath and this one and this one, helps you to be here now, to find ease and presence just where you are.

This breath. Ease. Calm. Resting in the present as the body breathes itself.

As you continue to sense the breath with a mindful loving awareness, let the waves of experience—sounds

and sensations, thoughts, feelings—rise and fall like waves of the ocean around the breath. Periodically, one of the waves will get quite strong and pull your attention away from the breath.

Now, opening up the meditation: when a strong wave arises, let go of the breath as the focus of attention and turn toward it, as if to bow. You can name it. Itching. Tingling. Sadness. Joy. Happiness. Fear. Longing. You can name it thinking or planning, remembering. As you name the wave, let yourself sense it move through the body and mind, naming it gently—sad, sad, sad, or excited, excited. After a while, the wave will diminish, arising and passing, appearing out of emptiness and vanishing. Then return back for a time to the breath, steady and calm, this breath, until another strong wave arises.

In this way, you become the field of loving awareness. You are the awareness—noticing the breath, steadying the attention with it, and acknowledging the waves of experience.

when they're strong, just as you notice the breath coming for a time and going.

Keep it simple. This breath. Calm and steady. Or this experience, acknowledged with a name. Let it rise. Let it be felt. And in its time, pass away.

You are the loving awareness. The mindful loving awareness itself. Rest in it. Relax into it. Patient. Steady. With a kind and compassionate heart.

You are the mindful loving awareness, receiving it all with quiet, steady attention.

You are the mindful loving awareness, the space of kind and loving awareness that notices the movement of breath and the waves of experience. And around them all, you become still, quiet, vast. So let them come and go as they will.

And when you're ready, let your eyes open gently. Take another long, deep breath or two. And stay with the same field of loving awareness—with eyes open and heart open—this moment.

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