Here and Now Meditation | Monday Night

Jack Kornfield · Notable Dhamma Teachers — Jack Kornfield · 28:20

Find a way to sit where you're comfortable and stable and at ease in your body. Let yourself be settled. If you're able, allow your eyes to close gently, or at least lower your gaze, and turn your attention just here and now to the present experience.

Start, if you will, with two or three long breaths, and allow each of the long breaths out to release whatever they will—to let yourself open, become more present. Tune into your body seated here with a loving awareness. Let your 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 drop, relaxed, and the arms and hands rest easily.

Feel the weight of your body on the seat or the cushion or the floor, wherever you are. Sense how it's met equally by the earth below you, that you can let go and rest on the earth just where you are—with ease and trust in this moment, relaxed and present. Let the belly be soft and the breath natural. Let the heart be soft as well, to receive whatever arises with the spirit of kindness and compassion.

Now, with this embodied presence, begin to notice the experiences here and now. There will be sensations of the body, sounds, emotions and feelings arising. A parade of images and thoughts and words will come and go. And you take your seat just where you are, in the midst of all of these rising and passing experiences.

To help settle the attention, to help quiet the mind and open the heart and the body, begin to notice how your body is breathing itself as you sit quietly. Amidst all the other waves of experience, turn your attention to feel the rhythm of the natural breath. You can feel it as coolness in the nostrils, swirling and tingling in the back of the throat, or the rise and fall of chest or belly, or the whole body breathing. If it's at all hard to feel, put one hand on your belly and feel the rise and fall of the belly in the palm of your hand. Leave it there.

Taking our seat halfway between heaven and earth as the Buddha that we are, begin to quiet the mind and steady the attention first by feeling this ever-changing rhythm of breath rising and passing. Let your attention be a loving awareness that kindly notices this breath as it opens and as it dissolves.

After a few breaths, very often you'll notice the attention wanders off to thinking or planning or sounds or sensations somewhere else. This is natural. As soon as you notice, notice what's there and then gently return to feel the next breath. It's the very returning and coming back that starts to steady the mind and the attention—just here, this breath. Coming back again and again, gently.

As you feel each breath, as it comes and goes naturally, the point is not to become a good breather, but to feel the breath, to use the attention to the breath to invite a calm and steady ease to arise. Breathing in and out—calm. Rising and falling—ease. Some people find it helps to even whisper these words: calm, or ease, or steady, as they sense the breath come in and out. This breath. This moment.

As you feel the breath, calm and steady, there will be all the other waves of experience—thoughts and images, sounds, sensations, and so forth. Let them rise and fall like waves of the ocean around the breath, and feel the breath in the middle of them all.

From the steady attention to the breath, now you can open the awareness. When one of the waves becomes strong—so strong it pulls you away from the breath, not the background waves, but a strong emotion of sadness or excitement or fear or love or longing, or a big thought train or image of the future or past, or some strong sensation like cold or itching or pain—when a strong wave pulls the attention from the breath, let go of that focus and, as if to bow to it, turn your attention and acknowledge it with a soft whisper: sadness, excitement, tingling, itching, planning, remembering.

When you name the wave of experience, let yourself be the loving awareness that notices this wave as it rises in body and mind and then passes away. Sad, sad, sad, sad—and eventually it passes. Then you can go back to the breath. A loud sound comes: hearing, hearing—and that wave of experience passes.

And you can return to feel some more breath. You become the loving witness, the loving awareness. The quiet and steady attention on the breath. And then a gracious acknowledging, naming the strong experiences that rise like waves. Name them gently, and when they pass, return to the breath.

Rest in loving awareness. You are the space of loving awareness. The openness of loving awareness. Rest in it. Just here. And notice the breath as it comes and goes. Name the strong waves of experience as they arise, received in loving awareness, and after time, pass away.

You are just here, unshaken, unmoved, the one seed in the middle of it all. This breath. This moment's experience. You are the Buddha. Seated. Silent. Loving awareness. Receiving the breath. The waves of experience. And you are the silent vastness of awareness itself. Loving awareness.

Bell

Who are you? When you look deeply, you won't find anything. There are thoughts and feelings that come and go. What there is, is this remarkable awareness, loving awareness, that knows them all. Rest in it. Relax into it. It is your home.

And when you're ready, let your eyes open gently.

You know what the bell sounds like. In fact, you know everything. This is all just a reminder. Oh yes, I do know.

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