Tree of Enlightenment Meditation | Monday Night

Jack Kornfield · Notable Dhamma Teachers — Jack Kornfield · 25:00

Let yourself sit in a way that's stable and comfortable—perhaps feet flat on the floor if you're on a chair, or on a cushion, whatever way lets your body feel grounded and steady.

Settling yourself, you take your seat halfway between heaven and earth, under your own tree of enlightenment.

Let your eyes close gently, or if there's any problem with that, at least lower your gaze. Begin with two or three long breaths, and with each exhale, let go of whatever wants to be released.

As you sit, let your body be both present and also relaxed. 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 the simple upright. Let your shoulders relax and your arms and hands rest easily.

Feel the weight of your body resting on your seat, and how, as you let go, the earth completely supports you. You take your seat in the middle of all experience as the Buddha that you are.

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, compassion.

Now, to bring the body and mind and heart together just here in the present, begin to notice how your body is breathing itself—this miraculous expanding and contracting, the in and out of the breath. Exchanging air with the leaves of the trees around you and with the breath of every other living being on earth, we share this atmosphere. Feel it wherever you can sense it: coolness in the nostrils, swirling, tingling in the back of the throat, or the rise and fall of chest or belly.

Sense this living breath, relaxing as you feel each breath come and go.

The point of awareness of breathing is not to become a good breather—your body already does that beautifully—but to use it to steady and calm the attention and become more present. If it's hard to feel the breath, put one hand on your belly and feel it rise and fall in the palm of your hand. With each breath, if it's helpful, you can whisper softly: *calm* or *steady* or *ease* in the background as you relax into feeling the breath.

As you feel the breath, there will be, of course, sounds and thoughts and emotions that arise at the same time. Let them be in the background for now. Let them rise and fall like waves of the ocean around the

breath. Your attention, calm and steady, is just to feel this breath in the middle of it all.

When the attention wanders off, as it will often, when you notice, gently come back to the next breath. Again and again, returning to this breath. Like training the puppy: sit, stay. Rest your attention, ease and calm, this breath. Bring it back over and over. Sit, stay.

Let it gradually settle. Invite it to feel this breath and relax into it. This breath, rising and falling or coming in and out. Relaxing. Ease. Steady.

You're establishing a presence of mindful, loving awareness of the breath. This breath: beginning, middle, and an end, and a space arising. Then the next breath. This breath. Rest in it.

Now, as you continue to steady the attention with the breath, with mindfulness of breathing, you can open the field of attention. When one of the background waves becomes strong—not just in the background, but a strong wave of emotion, of sadness or excitement or longing, or a loud sound, or a big thought: planning, remembering, figuring out, worrying—when a big wave arises, you can let go of the attention to the breath. With the same mindful, loving awareness, you can acknowledge the wave, naming it gently: *sad, sad*, or *excited, excited*, or *planning, planning*.

Feel the whole energy of that wave of emotion or thought or sound. *Hearing, hearing.* Let it rise and move through the body and mind as you name it gently. Then, when it passes away—which it will—let there be a quiet moment, and then return to the breath.

You rest just here in the reality of this moment, the present, feeling the breath as it breathes itself, or naming gently and acknowledging the big waves of experience as they rise for a time and then pass away.

You sit like the Buddha—kind, loving awareness—allowing things to rise and pass. And you are the awareness itself. You are the loving awareness that witnesses them all.

Keep it simple. This breath, calm, steady. Or this wave of experience. Name gently: planning, planning; sad, sad; excited, excited. And you remain the loving witness. You are mindful, loving awareness, noticing just now the arising and passing. And you are still and peaceful in the midst of it all.

You are the mindful loving awareness. The Buddha seated just where you are. Noticing the breath and the waves of experience. And you are the loving awareness itself.

Rest in it.

Trust it.

So let your eyes open again gently, staying with the quality of presence, mindful presence, or loving awareness.

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