Waves of Experience Meditation

Jack Kornfield · Notable Dhamma Teachers — Jack Kornfield · 19:57

Find a way to sit that is stable and comfortable. Settling the physical body and finding a stable seat is very helpful in stabilizing and quieting the mind. Once you find a way for your body to be stable and comfortable, if it's okay, allow your eyes to close gently for this time.

We'll go through some basic instructions for those who are new, or as a reminder of mindfulness practice—mindful, loving awareness—and we'll have periods of silence.

With your eyes closed, first take a couple of long breaths and let go of whatever wants to be released. Bring your attention to this precious human body you've been given. First, to your face. Let the 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. Let yourself find a simple upright posture. Let the shoulders relax. Let the arms and hands rest easily.

Feel the weight of your body—buttocks and legs and feet—carrying this weight. And feel how the seat you're on and the earth beneath can completely support you. You can relax and be held by Mother Earth just here, steady and present. 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, with this embodied presence, with a mindful loving awareness, begin to notice what's here, this moment in the present. There will be physical sensations—all the energies and sensations of the body, pleasant and painful. Tingling, warm, cold. Places of tension and ease. There will be emotions, states of mind and feelings. There will be thoughts, pictures and words. And you become the loving witness to it all, steady and calm.

To help with this steadiness, one common practice is to start by feeling the body breathing itself—the breath—amidst all the sounds and sensations and thoughts. Feel your breath: coolness in the nostrils, or swirling tingling in the back of the throat, or the rise and fall of chest or belly. If it's difficult to sense the breath, put one hand on your belly and feel it rise and fall on the palm of your hand.

With each breath, invite a sense of ease or calm. You can even whisper these words in the back of the mind, allowing the breath to invite the mind and heart and body to settle. As you sense the breath, there will be thoughts and sounds, feelings and emotions, sensations. Let all the other experiences that come and go rise and fall like waves of the ocean around the breath.

Feel how this breath keeps breathing itself so naturally in the midst of it all. This breath, just as it is—long or short, deep or shallow—no judgment, just a loving awareness.

From this place of stillness, you'll notice that among all the background waves, the attention will get pulled sometimes to a strong wave, a big wave. It could be a loud sound or a strong sensation in the body. Or it might be an emotion—sadness, frustration, longing, joy—or thoughts.

When you notice that a wave has pulled your attention from the breath, receive it. Let go of the attention to the breath and receive it with the same loving awareness, as if to bow to it gently. Name it: "Oh, sadness... sad, sad," or "excitement, excitement," or if it's a thought, "planning, planning" or "remembering, remembering," or "tingling" or "hot" in the body, or "cool." Feel this wave and name it gently.

Let it rise like a wave of the ocean. Be felt and known. And let it pass away in its own time. Then you can return to feel a few more breaths until another wave comes along.

You rest just here in the reality of the present—steady and calm, at ease. This breath, this wave of experience, received with loving awareness.

You are the loving awareness. You are the loving witness to it all. Steady and calm, allowing it to rise, be known, and in due season to pass away.

You rest in the timeless present, just here. Rest in loving awareness. It is who you are. You are awareness itself—the loving witness of all the waves of experience, all the dramas of human life and human incarnation.

Take your seat as the awakened one, as awareness itself, with love and compassion and an immense freedom.

Staying with this quiet, open-hearted presence, allow your eyes to open when you're ready. Sense that you can carry this ease, this loving awareness, as you open to the world around you.

Transcriptions produced locally using Swiss low-carbon electricity. Corrections and rewriting by cloud-hosted AI.