



Reflection on interconnectedness:

This is a practice that can be
done in any posture.

Just be relaxed,
be at ease.

See if you can begin to
trace back all those people
who are involved in your
interest and meditation.

Someone might have
given you a book,
read you a poem,
played you a piece of music,
told you about their meditation experience.

Let a sense of them,
recollection of them
come into the room with you.

Consider including those who
have really hurt you,
not just those who you find
a little bit annoying or irritating,
but someone's who's actions
have really brought you to an edge
so that you almost said,
"I've got to find another way to be happy.
I have to look more deeply into life."

After all,
they're a part of why we're
here now as well.

Maybe you had a teacher who
instilled love of learning and
a willingness to be adventurous.

Maybe you had a parent
who instilled confidence



in your ability to try new things
or explore new terrain.

Maybe you've had a child who's opened
you up to a sense of wonder and interest.

Just let them be here with you now.

What about the clothing that you're wearing?

How many forms of life,
how many people,
how many beings
have been involved
in a growing of that fiber,
creation of cloth,
transporting it,
selling it?

The creation of the building
in which you're sitting
or the stewards of the plots of land
if you're outside.

All the forms of life
involved in the food
that you've eaten today.

Creature in the earth
who planted that seed
and nurtured that crop,
who did the harvest,
transported the food,
sold the food,
prepared the food.

You can see that none of us is
actually independent,
alone, or cut off,
however alone we might
sometimes feel.



They're all a part of the
greater fabric of life,
this immense web of relationships
and connections and influences,
this immense web of interdependence.

We arrive at this moment
in time born by a sea,
an ocean of conditions.

If we look at a tree,
we can see it as just a tree,
or we can look at a tree
and sense the soil
and everything that affects
the quality of that soil,
which is nourishing the tree.

The rainfall,
everything affecting the
quality of that rainfall.
The sunlight and the moonlight.
The quality of the air.

Is the tree just a tree
or the confluence of all
these conditions coming together,
moving, changing?
And so too we can see ourselves.

Meditation on seeing the good
even though our more habituated
tendency might be to remember
the things we've done wrong
and the mistakes we've made,
the things we regret.

We can consciously shift our attention
to include the good within ourselves
and so too when we look at others.

This is not an exercise meant to deny
that anything is wrong or regrettable,



but if we look at somebody and
we only think about the mistakes
they've made,
then a tremendous sense of self
and other and us and them
can be reinforced.

Whereas if we include even one
good thing if we can think of it,
then a bridge is built
so that when we honestly and directly
look at what's difficult,
it's more from a stance of
being side by side
rather than across this huge gulf
of seeming separation.
Beginning with oneself,
just in a relaxed,
easy posture.

However you feel comfortable.
See if you can think of one good
thing you did yesterday.
It may not have been very
big or grandiose.

Maybe you smiled at somebody.
Maybe you listened to them.
Maybe you let go of some annoyance
at a slow clerk at a store.
Maybe you forgave yourself
for not saying something
totally correctly.
Maybe you were generous.
Maybe you sat down to meditate.
Maybe you thanked a bus driver.

It's not conceit or arrogance
to consider these things.

It's quite nourishing,
replenishing to take joy,
to take delight in the good



that lives through us
that we can manifest.

If at any time whether with ourselves
or somebody else
we cannot think of something good,
then there's another reflection that we do,
which is simply to recall
that all beings want to be happy.

Everybody wants to be happy.

This urge towards happiness is nothing
to be squeamish about or feel funny about.
The problem is not the urge.

The problem is ignorance,
not really sensing where genuine
happiness might be found,
and so making the mistakes
that might cause so much
suffering for ourselves or
for somebody else.

That urge toward happiness itself
is rightful;
it's appropriate.

When we can combine it with wisdom
instead of with ignorance,
it becomes like a homing instinct
for freedom and can help us
cut through many obstacles.

We start with ourselves
and then with others,
looking for the good.

If it's just not going to happen that way,
we switch to this other reflection,
recalling that all beings want to be happy.



Think of a benefactor,
someone who's helped you.
Here their good qualities
might come in a rush.

You can appreciate that about them,
those aspects,
those efforts,
those acts of kindness.
Think of a good friend.
Appreciate the good within them.
Think of someone you know
who's having a difficult time right now.
They're ill or hurting.

Think of the good within them,
the times they've reached
out to help others,
their own sources of strength.

You can see that this person
is not just the problem,
but something bigger.

Think of someone you have
a little bit of difficulty with,
a conflict, unease.

See if you can find some good
reflected in things they've done,
choices they've made.

If not,
you can switch to that other reflection,
remembering that they too
just like each one of us
wants to be happy.
They want to be happy.

Everybody wants the same
sense of belonging,
feeling at home in this body,



this mind, this life.
Ignorance is a very strong force.

I will close with a few moments of
the reflection that all beings
want to be happy.
May they be happy.

You can silently repeat that
over and over again.

You can close the session with
a few moments of reflection
that all beings want to be happy.
May they be happy.

You can silently repeat those
phrases again and again.
All beings want to be happy.
May they be happy.

Meditation on compassion.

This is a reflection that can be
done in any posture,
as open or closed.

Just be relaxed.

Call to mind a difficult emotion
you felt recently;
anger, greed, jealousy, fear.

Notice how you feel about
that emotion.
Are you ashamed of it?
Do you dislike yourself for it?
Do you feel you should have been
able to prevent it from arising?
Do you consider yourself in
some way bad or wrong
for this feeling?



See what happens if you
translate that sense of bad,
wrong, defective, terrible to painful,
to recognize that this state of anger,
fear, or jealousy is a painful state.

It's a state of suffering.

See what happens to your relationship
to that feeling as you make this translation.

Take that emotion,
see what it feels like
in your body;
the anger, the fear,
the jealousy
now held with some kindness,
some compassion.
Observe the various sensations.

Maybe it's tightening in your chest,
constriction.
Notice the nature of the compassion
which was holding it,
surrounding it.

The pain is there and the
compassion is there.

Notice the affect if that sense
of bad and wrong and terrible comes back.

Now imagine someone you know
filled with that same emotion;
jealousy, anger, fear, greed.

Notice what happens as you describe
to yourself those states of emotion as bad,
wrong, terrible, horrible.

What happens as you respond to them,
the states of pain or suffering?



You can reflect on the fact that
we can't seem to control the
arising of these feelings.

We didn't invite them.
We didn't wish for them.

As conditions come together,
they arise and we see our own greed,
jealousy, hatred, and so on.

We don't need to be overcome by them,
defined by them,
fall into them,
act from them.

We're actually not able to
prevent them from arising.

This is just in the nature of things
for ourselves and for others.
We can't commit ourselves
to trying to see them very quickly,
to recognize their painful nature,
to have compassion for ourselves,
and to let go.
We can't commit ourselves
to remembering that
when someone else is acting badly,
the state that is likely motivating them
of greed,
or hatred,
or fear is a painful state
and we can have compassion for them.
Even as we may take strong action
to try to change the situation,
protect ourselves,
or take care of someone else,
our motive in doing so need not be
a sense of disgust or aversion
but can be that recognition of
the pain they, too, are in.



Meditation on emotion:
bring up a joyous feeling,
perhaps a memory,
a plan,
an encounter,
and feel the emotion within that,
sense of delight,
gratitude,
wonder,
whatever it might be.
See where you feel it
in your body.
What does it feel like?

How is it changing?

Can you experience it fully
in the present moment
without leaning forward
into the future?
I've got to get some more.
I can't let it go away.
If you see those kinds of reactions
in your mind,
settle back.
Come back into your body.
Feel the different sensations being born
of that emotion in this moment.

Bring up a difficult emotion.
Let's say it's anger.
In the same way,
feel it in your body.
The circumstances,
the provocation,
the plans for revenge
don't really matter.
In this meditation,
we're focused on the feeling itself.
So apart from the story,
what does the anger feel like in your body?



Or does it feel like it's a mood?
It's not just one thing.
It may be moments of sadness,
moments of fear,
moments of frustration,
moments of helplessness.
Just watch them arise and pass away
to make up this emotion we call anger.

Notice that neither the joyful state
or the angry state is
permanent,
fixed,
unchanging.

(inaudible),
changing,
evanescent.

You may find your attention
going back into some story.
First I'm going to do this.
Then I'm going to do that.
If you can recognize that,
just let go of it.
Come back to your direct experience
in the moment.
What am I feeling right now,
and what does it feel like?
What's happening?
What's its nature?

And even after you've finished
the formal session of meditation,
see if you can bring some of this skill
into your encounters throughout the day.
What am I feeling right now?
What does it feel like?
What's its nature?

Letting go of thought.
In this meditation,
you can sit comfortably or lie down.



Close your eyes,
or if you're keeping them open,
just find a spot in front of you
to rest your gaze,
let it go.

And center your attention on
the feeling of the in and out breath
at the nostrils,
at the chest,
or at the abdomen,
just the normal natural breath.

And as you feel the sensations of the breath,
you can make a very quiet mental notation of breath,
breath,
with the in breath,
with the out breath.

And then when a thought arises
that's strong enough
to take your attention away from the breath,
simply note it as not breath.
It's not the breath,
and you can recognize it in just that way.
It doesn't matter if
it's the most beautiful thought in the world
or the most terrible thought in the world,
the one you would never disclose
to anybody else.
It's simply not the breath.
You don't have to judge yourself.
You don't have to get lost
in the thought or elaborate it.
You recognize it's not the breath.
Very gently let go
and bring your attention back
to the feeling of the breath.
It's breath and not breath.

Some of your thoughts may be tender,
caring.
Some may be very cruel,
hurtful.



They're not the breath.
See them.
Recognize them.
Let them go.
Bring your attention back
to the feeling of the breath.

The thoughts are like clouds
moving through the sky.
Some are very light
and fluffy-looking,
very inviting.
Some are quite ominous
and threatening,
but they're not the breath.
Just let them go.

Our habitual tendency is
to grab onto a thought,
build an entire world around it,
or push it away,
struggle against it.
Here we stay even,
balanced,
calm.
We simply recognize
it's not the breath.
Very gently let it go.
Bring your attention back
one breath at a time.

And when you feel ready,
you can open your eyes
and relax.
Mental noting: this is a meditation where
we first center our attention
on the feeling of the breath,
wherever it's most predominant,
wherever it's easiest for us,
just the normal natural breath.
And quietly note in,
out,
in,



out,
or rising,
falling
to help support
the awareness of the breath.

Then if something arises
that is predominant,
that takes over our awareness,
sensation,
sound,
image,
emotion,
thinking,
see if you can make
a quiet mental note
of just what that experience is
in the moment
without judgment,
just as an act of recognition.

Oh,
thinking.
Planning.
Anger.

Joy.
If the note comes easily,
you don't need to struggle
to get exactly the right word.
It doesn't need to be elaborate.
It's just an act of recognition.

Oh,
this is what's happening right now.
There's sadness.
There's happiness.
Hearing.
Seeing.
Thinking.

Gently note that experience
three or four times.
Hearing.
Hearing.
Hearing.



See if you can bring your attention back
to the feeling of the breath.
The mental note is very quiet.
It first of all establishes
a sphere of awareness
which is not caught up in that experience
but is able to discern it,
to recognize it.
It also provides
an instant feedback system for us.
Is this an open-hearted,
even acceptance?
Oh,
this is what's happening right now.
Or is it more like thinking with fretfulness,
resentment?
And if we hear that,
we say it again.
Oh,
thinking.
And then bring your attention back
to the feeling of the breath.
You don't need to try
to take in everything.
It's just those things that arise quite strongly,
pull us away from the breath.
We spend a few moments
as though to say oh yeah,
this is what's happening right now,
and then we come back.

The mental noting is
the platform for mindfulness.
We see what's happening
right now as it is.
We're not elaborating it.
We're not judging it.
We're not struggling against it
nor falling into it.
Oh,
there's thinking.
Anger.
Joy.



Because it's the platform for mindfulness,
it's the platform for learning.
We can see just what's happening right now.

Many things will arise and pass away,
some very pleasant,
some unpleasant,
some neutral,
but our job is just
to note them,
to recognize them,
to see them for what they are,
to see the truth of this very moment
and then breathe.

And when you feel ready,
you can open your eyes.

Meditation on balance:
two of the forces that we're cultivating
in meditation practice are
tranquility and energy,
calmness and alertness,
relaxation and investigation.
In any method of meditation,
we work to bring these together,
to bring them into balance.
So it's said that from the beginning,
this is reflected in our posture.

If you're sitting,
you want to have your back straight
without being stiff or tense.
Too much energy.

You also don't want to be slumped over
so that you're nearly bound to fall asleep.
You want to be upright,
not have too much tranquility,
relaxation.

So if you sit straight
without being tense,



and here,
too,
you can close your eyes or not,
and center your attention on
the feeling of the normal natural breath,
and notice the play of energy or interest
and calmness or relaxation
in how you are with the breath.

Are you way far back,
don't care really what it feels like?
Come forward a little bit.
Feel the actual sensations
at the nostrils,
at the chest,
or at the abdomen.

Do you have sort of a death grip
on the breath thinking
if I hold on really tight,
my mind won't wander?
When in fact,
it will actually wander more.
Maybe you need to relax a little bit.

If you can feel yourself
in the place in the middle
with tranquility and alertness,
you'll see how just one breath is
tremendously fulfilling.
We're not overriding it.
We're not shrinking back from it.
We're rather meeting it completely.

Sometimes in my own practice,
I use this image of holding something very fragile,
very precious
like something made of glass
in my hand.
If I were to grab it too tightly,
it would shatter and break.
But if I were to get lazy or negligent
and my hand would fall open,



it would fall off and break.
So I just cradle it.
I'm in touch with it.
I cherish it.
And so,
too,
we are with each breath.
We don't want to grab it too tight
nor be too loose,
too energized
or too relaxed.
We meet this moment,
we meet this breath,
and we cherish it
one breath at a time.

If you find yourself
getting way far back,
bored,
disinterested,
come forward.
If you're too far forward,
too tense,
trying too hard,
settle back,
let the breath come to you.
If you feel you need
to adjust the balance,
don't worry about it.
You needn't question yourself
am I too tight?
Am I too loose?
But let your intuition arise.
Then come back
to the place in the middle.
It's just one breath.

If you have too little energy,
you'll get sleepy,
sluggish,
dull.
You can sit up a little straighter.
If your eyes have been closed,



you can open them up.
Maybe take a few deep breaths
to allow the sensation
to be more intense.
And then once again,
allow the breath to become natural.
Aim your attention toward
just one breath.
It's the whole universe.
Nothing else matters.

If you have too much energy,
you'll feel restless,
agitated,
worried. If that happens,
see if you can feel
the sensations of one breath
as though your hands were in water
and you felt the water swirling around,
all the different sensations.
So,
too,
with your mind,
your attention,
you can feel the sensations.
It will soothe you,
ground the energy.

You can feel just one breath.

And when you feel ready,
you can open your eyes
and relax.