



The following meditation is led by Tara Brach. To access more of my meditations or join my e-mail list, please visit www.tarabrach.com.

The Buddha taught that as part of arriving, settling, entering any meditation or anything in our lives, the value of gladdening the mind. The many ways to remember what we're forgetting, remember in some ways what we love. So, I'd like to invite you to begin by taking some moments to reflect on whatever you feel most grateful for. Reflect on what you love.

And as something, some experience comes to mind, take some moments to let the good feelings that come with that. [00:01:34] **Be felt. Be felt** [1.8] sense in the body. Let yourself [00:01:40] **entransome**. [0.6] Really rest in that, soak it in, feel it.

Sensing what it's like to have the experience of appreciation really spread through the body, mind, and being. And you can deepen that as we've practiced some together with the image and the felt sense of a smile. You might imagine the great open sky around us filled with the curve and the sense of a smile, a vast smile. Sensing that openness of space and a smile filling it and then letting that smile spread through the mind. Letting the mind kind of emerge with that great sky so your mind is filled with the curve and the felt sense of a smile.

Letting the smile spread through the eyes. Lifting the outer corner slightly. Sense a natural, softening, awakening, letting the brow be smooth. Letting the jaw be unhinged, a slight smile at the mouth filling the inside of the mouth smiling. Noticing the whole play of sensations to the area of the lips, tongue, gums, teeth.

You might visualize and sense a smile spreading through the throat area. Just sense the space that's there. At ease, receptive, aware of the sensations, the aliveness, the space in the throat.

Again, sensing the eyes, soft and smiling, because we tend to recontract so quickly. The mouth and the throat. Sensing a smile spreading through the chest area, smiling into the heart and letting a smile fill that whole region of the chest. So, that you can sense into the space that's there, the aliveness that's there.

Letting the sense of spaciousness spread out so that the shoulders are free to relax back down some. Back and down falling away from the shoulders. Hands resting easily. You might soften the hands and feel the aliveness there.

Still sensing now an openness to the chest and then softening down,, relaxing, loosening through the abdominal area. And again, you might let the visual image and the felt sense of a smile spread through the belly. Gently receiving the breath deep in the torso. Intimate



attention to the sensation, the space inside the belly.

Scanning down to the pelvic region. Again, with this image and felt sense of a smile spreading through, filling the pelvic region. Noticing capacity to really open to sensation. To sense the space and aliveness there.

Aware of the length and the volume of the legs. Feeling the awareness inside the feet. The movement of sensation there. And widening the lens so that you can receive this whole body as a field of sensation. Letting everything happen. Including an awareness of the play of sound. Listening to and feeling the whole moment.

Aware in the foreground of this changing play of sound, sensations feelings. Now so aware of the space that it's all happening in. That background of formless awake space.

To take what the Zen teachers call the backwards step, is to simply relax back and be that wakeful openness that includes and perceives is changing, arising, dissolving, life.

Discovering how awareness perceives sensations. That awake stillness. That receives changing experience of tingling and vibrating movement of life. Discovering how this open awareness perceives sound. There's a vast silence that's listening. The silence that listens to the thoughts.

Noticing that the mind has contracted and been in the shape of a thought form is really the beginning of waking up, an opportunity to become more skilled and homecoming. The mind's been inside a thought, as you start recognizing that, it's like an airplane that's been inside a cloud, you coming out of the cloud and sensing clouds are still there but you're aware of the whole sky, whole reality of what's here. You can consciously reopen and reawaken the senses again. Listening, perhaps relaxing through the body. Letting go in the shoulders a bit, softening the hands. The awareness inside the chest, the belly. Re-establishing that embodied wakefulness.

And as you're feeling this body, this breathing body, also including in the background the sense of the awareness that's here, the very presence that is perceiving. Full presence includes both the sky, the background and the body. Moment to moment, a relaxed attentiveness.