

Guided Meditation 1

Uncontrived Half-Day Retreat

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Kim Allen

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All right, so I decided to call these half days dwelling in the Dharma, or at least that's what this first one is called. And that's kind of a reference to the fact that in my Sutta group on Fridays, which some of you come to sometimes, we just read a teaching called dwelling in the Dharma, or living by the teachings, depending on the title was translated. And it was about how, you know, it's very nice to read the suttas and recite the suttas and think about the suttas and so forth. But that really what matters is kind of understanding it, experientially in your own experience, what that refers to. And that, at least in this in the teaching that we read, a sort of culminating part is where the Buddha says it's really nice to do all of that, and then you shouldn't meditate. So the implication being that that's how one retakes it in. And I think that's the case. And I know all of us already meditate. And some people go the other way, like they meditate for a long time. And then they suddenly start thinking, Where does this come from? Like, maybe I should try reading some suttas. And it works both ways. It works both ways. I actually, I was never very interested in studying music theory. Like I didn't, I was bored with learning like the chords and the majors and the minors and all that. But I played music from age six onward. And so I was, I was someone who just kind of like, learned to play through, I mean, they don't teach you all that stuff in elementary school anyway, right? But as I got older, there came a point where I suddenly said, you know, maybe I should like, I know there's a theory behind this music that I've been in orchestras and wind ensembles and so forth for years. So I finally read like an introductory book on music theory when I was in graduate school, and in a totally different subject. And I thought, Oh, yeah, I'll read about music. It was great. I was like, Oh, this makes so much sense. Wow, there's the circle of fifths and like all this. And it's like, Oh, okay, not that I ever use that particularly, but it was great. It like put some things in place in my mind. So I don't know if that's a valid analogy or not. But I kind of see this in practitioners as people have different relationships to theory and the practice. But I think in the end, the most powerful combination is to have some of both of those and a lot of the practice. I'm biased toward that. Okay, so today, I shouldn't keep talking too much because the idea is to do some practice. And I'd like to offer

a guided meditation for our first sit and kind of talk us through some ways that we can connect in to our body, our breath, our heart, our mind, based on fairly classical teachings, what kind of in my language around them. And then we'll do some walking also. And then we'll come back for another sit that will be much less guided. I'm not sure if I if or what I'll say at the beginning, but mostly silent to your own thing. And then we'll have some Dharma, some Dharma time after that at the end. And I hope this to finish around new Pacific, which is about two and a half hours from now, whatever zone you're in. Okay, so with that, let's let's meditate. So finding a posture that's comfortable for you. Settling in. I find it's helpful on these online things to consciously let myself kind of ease back a little bit because there's a kind of leaning forward toward the computer sometimes. And also, dropping the kind of center of gravity of attention downward into the body, in case it was up in the head, which is another tendency we can have. Maybe taking a long, slow, deep breath, and on the exhale, sinking a little further down into the body. Like you could lower yourself down into a comfortable chair. After you've been on your feet all day. Softening. And it's helpful even to notice the posture that we're in. So I know it were, everyone I can see is in the sitting posture, but in addition, really tuning into the feeling of the body as a whole, like the structure of it. Your head is above your shoulders. And then it goes down the torso and there are your hips and whatever you're sitting on, there's some additional pressure there. And then your legs might be sitting or they might be folded. And where are your feet? In your hands. Kind of a geometric structural sense. This is the body right now. And then connecting in also with the mind. How is it that you're knowing the body? You're knowing it through your awareness or your perception, various abilities in mind to know things. And what's, you know, kind of a sense, what's the structure of that right now? Is the mind agitated or is there extra energy? Is it a little dull? Is it tending to lean forward, a little excited? Or is it a little uncertain? It's all fine, but we would want to know that. Sometimes I think of checking in with my mind, kind of like observing a pet. Like, how's the cat right now? How's the dog? It wouldn't be a verbal answer. You wouldn't observe how it looks, how it feels, and then you have a sense of that's how the dog is. So, the mind knowing the body. In itself. And then to bring in the specific container of meditation. Bringing in a sense of your orientation or your alignment. Some people like to say intention, but that can only if that works for you. What a sense of practice. What is the mind like when you know that you're practicing? So, bringing in that understanding. For some, this is just bringing mindfulness to the poor. For some, it's explicitly remembering that you are walking a path. Or that you want to meet experience with a nice view. You find something that feels meaningful for you. You know with that, inviting some ease. So, in the world of our practice. Hopefully that has a sense of goodness to it. So, inviting some softening in the body. Softening the eyes and the eye sockets. Softening down through the neck and shoulders. Down the arms. Down into the torso. Particularly inviting ease in the heart area. Down through the belly. Legs. Body works so hard for us all day.

Feeling gentle toward this body. So inviting ease in the mind also. How it is. How it is. This meditation will focus mostly on the body and the breath. So, connecting in with the simple sensations of breathing. If those are not already in your awareness. It's just a subtle shift. Not a sudden limiting of everything to the breath only. Just letting that come into your awareness. So, when you are in the awareness, you can feel it. So, when you are in the awareness, you can feel it. You may already have a way that you hope it should be connected with the breath. That's okay. But if it's of interest, I invite sensing the breath as part of the body. Kind of a whole body experience. Where the breath is in the foreground of the various bodily sensations. So, it's a whole body experience. The way we might be sitting out on the porch. And we're hearing the birds and seeing the trees and maybe their cars or people going by. But it's a windy day. And so, there's the gusts of wind blowing through that in the foreground. Laying themselves on top of the scene. While the breath blows through like the wind. And there's also the body sitting. The mind taking in all of that sounds. The breath is gently rhythmic. Which we can use to calm the mind, bring it into the present. And movement can also enliven mind if it's a little dull. It said that the breath body is one body among the bodies. So this particular form of the body is just what we're with now. The body that appears because of being tensioned to the breath. So almost as if the body is oscillating along with the breath. When the in-breath there's more sensation. So it's like the body becomes more vivid. A fuller experience. And when on the out-breath it becomes very light. So if you're turning down a knob on your vividness, you have more subtle sensations there. It's like the knob goes up and goes down. The head becomes into forms and becomes very vivid and subtle. Between the person and the character. So the mind, the invitation is to find ease in each of those. All of toward releasing any tension brings in. As the body comes into form and some brightness on the in-breath, does the mind resist that? Does it grab at that or delight in that? That adds tension. Along the out-breath, those things fade away. Does the mind resist that? By grabbing onto thought, drifting away, getting scared that things are going away. That too adds tension. Letting the body be bright and full and dense. Letting the body fade away, maybe disappear at the end of the out-breath. This is the nature of the breath body. Perhaps letting the body kind of melt into a more subtle, just and energetic experience. Living on a boundary softened, a monumental map of where everything is and what it or its labeled as. Just being with the direct experience of this turning up and down into the vividness and subtlety back and forth. Through the breath coming in, going out, the breath body. Perhaps inviting a release in the mind. Wherever there is something extra being added, could that be let go into a soft, very subtle experience. Just that invitation.