

Guided Meditation 2: Recognizing Absence

Uncontrived Half-day Retreat

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The aspect of experience that we can get familiar with is quite a subtle one, which is that we can come to recognize absence, recognize what is not present, or notice or see clearly what is not present. Just a few words. We see this in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*. In the third *Satipaṭṭhāna* (foundation or establishment of mindfulness), we are asked to notice when the *citta*, when the mind or heart is affected by lust or greed, and when it is not. So we're to notice when it is, greed is not present. Or the same with hatred – when is hatred not present. And what is that like? A *citta* without hatred, aversion, ill-will. And interestingly, the same with delusion: to notice when it's there and when it's not there. This is maybe an echo or an earlier foretaste of the freedom that is named as the absence of greed, hatred, and delusion. In the early teachings, freedom is mostly an absence.

So we'll sit together again – this sit, mostly silent. But if you're, you can now find a meditation posture and close the eyes if that's comfortable. Softening in again to the sitting form... We start again with inviting some ease throughout the body. Perhaps simply evoking ease and being available to what needs to adjust for that to happen, to whatever degree it can at this moment...

Inviting awareness, mindfulness in the mind, receptivity... Opening just a bit more in the body or the mind...

Noticing in the mind if there is any sense of lust or grasping, or the degree to which that is absent. Feel the peace or the relief in the mind that is not compelled to grasp at something right now...

Most likely the mind is not engulfed in hatred or ill will at this moment. What is it like to have relief from aversion, to the degree that it's absent? There's a subtle difference between noticing qualities like ease or tranquility, and noticing the absence of hatred. The harder you try to see absence, probably the harder it is to see it...

And to the degree that there is clarity at this moment, at least to some degree, we have an absence of delusion. An absence of fogginess or self-assertion – various forms delusion takes...

So in this sit, the invitation is to include, when it comes forth, noticing what is not present. Seeing the space or the silence. Nothing really needs to happen. Things will happen, arise and pass. But we don't feel that anything particular needs to happen. So just resting. Including noticing what is here and what is not here.