

# M E D I T A T I O N S

*Breathing in, I calm my body.  
Breathing out, I smile.  
Dwelling in this present moment,  
I know this is a wonderful moment.*

THICH NHAT HANH

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## *A Mindfulness Meditation*

*To begin meditation, select a quiet time and place. Be seated on a cushion or chair, taking an erect yet relaxed posture. Let yourself sit upright with the quiet dignity of a king or queen. Close your eyes gently and begin by bringing a full, present attention to whatever you feel within you and around you. Let your mind be spacious and your heart be kind and soft.*

*As you sit, feel the sensations of your body. Then notice what sounds and feelings, thoughts and expectations are present. Allow them all to come and go, to rise and fall like the waves of the ocean. Be aware of the waves and rest seated in the midst of them. Allow yourself to become more and more still.*

*In the center of all these waves, feel your breathing, your life-breath. Let your attention feel the in-and-out breathing wherever you notice it, as coolness or tingling in the nose or throat, as a rising and falling of your chest or abdomen. Relax and softly rest your attention on each breath, feeling the movement in a steady easy way. Let the breath breathe itself in any rhythm, long or short, soft or deep. As you feel each breath, concentrate and settle into its movement. Let all other sounds and sensations, thoughts and feelings continue to come and go like waves in the background.*

*After a few breaths, your attention may be carried away by one of the waves of thoughts or memories, by body sensations or sounds. Whenever you notice you have been carried away for a time, acknowledge the wave that has done so by softly giving it a name such as "planning," "remembering," "itching," "restless." Then let it pass and gently return to the breath. Some waves will take a long time to pass, others will be short. Certain thoughts or feelings will be painful. others will be pleasurable. Whatever they are, let them be.*

*At some sittings you will be able to return to your breath easily. At other times in your meditation you will mostly be aware of body sensations or of plans or thoughts. Either way is fine. No matter what you experience, be aware of it, let it come and go, and rest at ease in the midst of it all. After you have sat for twenty or thirty minutes in this way, open your eyes and look around you before you get up. Then as you move try to allow the same spirit of awareness to go with you into the activities of your day.*

*Spirit Rock Meditation Center  
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## A Meditation on Forgiveness

*Let yourself sit comfortably, allowing your eyes to close and your breath to be natural and easy. Let your body and mind relax. Breathing gently into the area of your heart, let yourself feel all the barriers you have erected and the emotions you have carried because you have not forgiven - not forgiven yourself, not forgiven others. Let yourself feel the pain of keeping your heart closed. Breathing softly, begin reciting the following words, letting the images and feelings that come up grow deeper as you repeat them.*

*There are many ways that I have hurt and harmed others, have betrayed or abandoned them, caused them suffering, knowingly or unknowingly, out of my pain, fear, anger, and confusion. Let yourself remember and visualize the ways you have hurt others. See the pain you have caused out of your own fear and confusion. Feel your own sorrow and regret. Sense that finally you can release this burden and ask for forgiveness. Take as much time as you need to picture each memory that still burdens your heart. And then as each person comes to mind, gently say: I ask for your forgiveness, I ask for your forgiveness.*

*Just as I have caused suffering to others, there are many ways that I have hurt and harmed myself: I have betrayed or abandoned myself many times in thought, word, or deed, knowingly' or unknowingly.*

*Feel your own precious body and life. Let yourself see the ways you have hurt or harmed yourself. Picture them, remember them. Feel the sorrow you have carried from this and sense that you can release these burdens. Extend forgiveness for each act of harm, one by one. Repeat to yourself:*

*For the ways I have hurt myself through action or inaction, out of fear, pain, and confusion, I now extend a full and heartfelt forgiveness. I forgive myself, I forgive myself.*

*There are many ways I have been harmed by others, abused or abandoned, knowingly or unknowingly, in thought, word, or deed.*

*We each have been betrayed. Let yourself picture and remember the many ways this is true. Feel*

*the sorrow you have carried from this past. Now sense that you can release this burden of pain by gradually extending forgiveness as your heart is ready. Recite to yourself:*

*I remember the many ways others have hurt, wounded, or harmed me, out of fear, pain, confusion, and anger. I have carried this pain in my heart long enough. To the extent that I am ready, I offer you forgiveness. To those who have caused me harm, I offer my forgiveness, I forgive you.*

*Let yourself gently repeat these three directions for forgiveness until you feel a release in your heart. For some great pains you may not feel a release; instead, you may experience again the burden and the anguish or anger you have held. Touch this softly. Be forgiving of yourself for not being ready to let go and move on. Forgiveness cannot be forced; it cannot be artificial. Simply continue the practice and let the words and images work gradually in their own way. In time you can make the forgiveness meditation a regular part of your life, letting go of the past and opening your heart to each new moment with a wise lovingkindness.*

*From "Forgiveness, Lovingkindness, and Peace" by Jack Kornfield*

## *A Meditation on Gratitude and Joy*

*Buddhist monks begin each day with a chant of gratitude for the blessings of their life. Native American elders begin each ceremony with grateful prayers to mother earth and father sky, to the four directions, to the animal, plant, and mineral brothers and sisters who share our earth and support our life. In Tibet, the monks and nuns even offer prayers of gratitude for the suffering they have been given: "Grant that I might have enough suffering to awaken in me the deepest possible compassion and wisdom." The aim of spiritual life is to awaken a joyful freedom, a benevolent and compassionate heart in spite of everything.*

*Gratitude is a gracious acknowledgment of all that sustains us, a bow to our blessings, great and small, an appreciation of the moments of good fortune that sustain our life every day. We have so much to be grateful for. Gratitude is confidence in life itself. In it, we feel how the same force that pushes grass through cracks in the sidewalk invigorates our own life. Gratitude gladdens the heart. It is not sentimental, not jealous, nor judgmental. Gratitude does not envy or compare. Gratitude receives in wonder the myriad offerings of the rain and the earth, the care that supports every single life. As gratitude grows it gives rise to joy. We experience the courage to rejoice in our own good fortune and in the good fortune of others.*

*Joy is natural to an open heart. In it, we are not afraid of pleasure. We do not mistakenly believe it is disloyal to the suffering of the world to honor the happiness we have been given. Like gratitude, joy gladdens the heart. We can be joyful for people we love, for moments of goodness, for sunlight and trees, and for the breath within our breast. And as our joy grows we finally discover a happiness without cause. Like an innocent child who does not have to do anything to be happy, we can rejoice in life itself, in being alive.*

*Let yourself sit quietly and at ease. Allow your body to be relaxed and open, your breath natural, your heart easy. Begin the practice of gratitude by feeling how year after year you have cared for your own life. Now let yourself begin to acknowledge all that has supported you in this care:*

*With gratitude I remember the people, animals, plants, insects, creatures of the sky and sea, air and water, fire and earth, all whose joyful exertion blesses my life every day. With gratitude I*

*remember the care and labor of a thousand generations of elders and ancestors who came before me. I offer my gratitude for the safety and well-being I have been given. I offer my gratitude for the blessings of this earth I have been given. I offer my gratitude for the measure of health I have been given. I offer my gratitude for the family and friends I have been given. I offer my gratitude for the community I have been given. I offer my gratitude for the teachings and lessons I have been given. I offer my gratitude for the life I have been given.*

*Just as we are grateful for our blessings, so we can be grateful for the blessings of others. Continue to breathe gently. Bring to mind someone you care about, someone it is easy to rejoice for. Picture them and feel the natural joy you have for their well-being, for their happiness and success. With each breath, offer them your grateful, heartfelt wishes:  
May you be joyful. May your happiness increase. May you not be separated from great happiness. May your good fortune and the causes for your joy and happiness increase. Sense the sympathetic joy and caring in each phrase. When you feel some degree of natural gratitude for the happiness of this loved one, extend this practice to another person you care about. Recite the same simple phrases that express your heart's intention. Then gradually open the meditation to include neutral people, difficult people, and even enemies - until you extend sympathetic joy to all beings everywhere, young and old, near and far.*

*From "Forgiveness, Lovingkindness, and Peace" by Jack Kornfield*

## *A Meditative Visit to the Temple of Healing*

*Imagine you are magically transported to a beautiful healing temple or power spot, a place of great wisdom and love. Take as much time as you need to sense it, feel it, picture it, in any way that feels good to you. Sense yourself sitting there, restfully and attentively. As you sit at this temple, this place of great wisdom, begin to reflect on your own life's journey more deeply. Gradually let yourself be aware of the wounds you carry that will require healing in the course of your journey.*

*Breathe softly, and gently feel whatever arises. As you sit, a wonderful and wise being from this healing temple will gently approach you. When this being comes quite near, you can picture or imagine or sense who or what they are. They will bow lightly and then come over and put the gentlest hand on you. With their most loving care, let them attend to your sorrows. Let them teach you their healing touch. You can also take your own hand as you sit at that temple and imagine bringing it to a place of sorrow or difficulty, touching that place with your hand as if YOU yourself were that beautiful being. Know that no matter how many times you have buried or resisted your sorrow, no matter how many times you have greeted it with your hatred, you can finally open to it.*

*Let your attention become like the hands of this wonderful wise being. Touch this place of sorrow with softness and tenderness. As you touch it, explore what is there. Is it warm or cool there? Is it hard, tight, or is it soft? Is it vibrating or moving, or is it still? Let your awareness be like the loving touch of Jesus or Buddha or the Goddess of Compassion, or Mother Mary. What is the temperature and texture of this sorrow? What color is there to be felt? What feelings are there to be felt? Let yourself become aware of all your feelings with a very loving and receptive heart. Let them be anything they need to be.*

*Then very gently and softly, touch this place of sorrow with pure sweetness. Let yourself sit peacefully, opening your heart and rest in this temple, allowing your healing and compassionate attention to bring you wave upon wave of healing. Stay as long as you wish. When you are ready to leave, imagine yourself bowing with gratitude.*

*As you leave, remember this temple is inside you. You can always go there.*

*Adapted from "A Path With Heart" by Jack Kornfield*

## *A Lovingkindness Meditation*

*The quality of loving-kindness is the fertile soil out of which an integrated spiritual life can grow. With a loving heart as the background, all that we attempt, all that we encounter, will open and flow more easily. While loving-kindness can arise naturally in us in many circumstances, it can also be cultivated. The following meditation is a 2,500-year-old practice that uses repeated phrases, images, and feelings to evoke loving-kindness and friendliness toward oneself and others. You can experiment with this practice to see if it is useful for you. It is best to begin by repeating it over and over for fifteen or twenty minutes once or twice daily in a quiet place for several months. At first this meditation may feel mechanical or awkward or even bring up its opposite, feelings of irritation and anger. If this happens, it is especially important to be patient and kind toward yourself, allowing whatever arises to be received in a spirit of friendliness and kind affection. In its own time, even in the face of inner difficulties, loving-kindness will develop.*

*Sit in a comfortable fashion. Let your body relax and be at rest. As best you can, let your mind be quiet, letting go of plans and preoccupations. Then begin to recite inwardly the following phrases directed to yourself. You begin with yourself because without loving yourself it is almost impossible to love others.*

*May I be filled with loving-kindness. May I be well. May I be peaceful and at ease. May I be happy.*

*As you say the phrases, you may also wish to use the image from the Buddha's instructions: picture yourself as a young and beloved child, or sense yourself as you are now, held in a heart of lovingkindness. Let the feelings arise with the words. Adjust the words and images so that you find the exact phrases that best open your heart of kindness. Repeat the phrases again and again, letting the feelings permeate your body and mind. Practice this meditation repeatedly for a number of weeks until the sense of loving-kindness for yourself grows. When you feel ready, in the same meditation period you can gradually expand the focus of your loving-kindness to include others.*

*After yourself, choose a benefactor, someone in your life who has truly cared for you. Picture them and carefully recite the same phrases, 'May he/she be filled with loving-kindness, and so forth. When loving-kindness for your benefactor has developed, begin to include other people you love in the meditation, picturing them and reciting the same phrases, evoking a sense of loving-kindness for them.*

*After this you can gradually begin to include others: friends, community members, neighbors, people everywhere, animals, the whole earth, and all beings. Then you can even experiment with including the most difficult people in your life, wishing that they, too, be filled with loving-kindness and peace. With some practice a steady sense of loving-kindness can develop and in the course of fifteen or twenty minutes you will be able to include many beings in your meditation, moving from yourself, to a benefactor and loved ones, to all beings everywhere. Then you can learn to practice it anywhere.*

*You can use this meditation in traffic jams, in buses and airplanes, in doctors' waiting rooms, and in a thousand other circumstances. As you silently practice this loving-kindness meditation among people, you will immediately feel a wonderful connection with them-the power of loving-kindness. It will calm your life and keep you connected to your heart.*

*From "A Path with Heart" by Jack Kornfield*

## A Soft Belly Meditation

*Find a comfortable place to sit and settle in there. And bring your attention into this body in which you sit. Feel this body. Let awareness come to the level of sensation in the body. Feel the breath breathing itself in the body. Sensations of body breathing. And gradually focus awareness in the abdomen. Sensations of the breath. Feel the breath breathing itself in the belly. Sensations of breath coming and going. Each inhalation the belly fills. Each exhalation the belly empties. The belly rising and falling with each breath. Sensation arising with each breath. And begin to soften the belly. Softening the belly to receive the sensations of the breath. Softening to receive life in the belly. Breath. Sensation in the belly. Received in a new softness. Softening. Softening the hardness, the holding in the belly that resists the breath, that resists sensation, that resists life. Softening that hardness.*

*Sensation floating in mercy and awareness. Softening. Let the breath breathe itself in the softness. Letting go of the resistance, of the fear, of the holding of hard belly. Letting go of the grief and distrust. Meeting them with mercy. With loving kindness in soft belly. Letting go. Letting go of the hardness, breathing it out. Letting in the mercy, the patience, the kindness, with each inhalation. Soft belly. Merciful belly. Have mercy on you. Softening to the pain. Softening the holding. Breathing it out. Breathing in mercy. Breathing in healing. In soft belly. In merciful belly. Softening. Letting go of years of posturing and hiding. So much holding in the belly. So much fear. So much grief. Softening. Levels and levels of letting go. Levels and levels of softening. Levels and levels of letting go. Levels and levels of healing. Softening the muscles. Softening the flesh. Softening the holding that resists, that limits life so. The armoring of the heart is discovered in the hardness of the belly. Meet this pain with mercy, not fear. Meet this grief in softness. In loving kindness. In soft belly, we have room for it all. Room to be born at last. Room to heal, to be. Room even to die in soft belly. All the fear, all the anger, all the distrust held so long in the belly. Have mercy on you. Let it go. Let it just be. Gently, in the softness. Met by mercy and awareness moment to moment. Breath to breath. Softening. Softening.*

*Even a single thought can tighten the belly, can reestablish separation and fear. Let thoughts come. Let thoughts go in soft belly. Expectation, doubt, confusion, harden the belly. Soften.*

*Thoughts arise uninvited. Let them float like bubbles in the vast spaciousness of soft belly. Moment to moment letting go. Moment to moment being in soft belly. In merciful belly. Softening. Making room for the heart. For mercy and compassion in the body, in the mind-for soft belly.*

*Nothing to hold to. Just the vast spaciousness. Just the mercy. Just the letting go of soft belly. In soft belly we have room for our pain and room for our healing. Soften. Letting go of the holding, of the mercilessness. Letting the universe be our body. Vast spaciousness of soft belly. There's room for it all. There's room for it all. Let it all float in soft belly. Breathing in the mercy. Breathing out the holding. Levels and levels of being in soft belly. Even if some hardness is discovered in the midst of this softness, no resistance. No hardening to the hardness. Soften. Rest in being. Let the hardness float in the softness. Nothing to change, no urgency in soft belly. Just trusting the process. Just being. Let the sound of these words pass right through you. No holding anywhere. Even to understanding. No grasping at more. No tightening. Just a gentle letting go of the pain moment to moment. Letting it float in soft belly. Letting the spaciousness of being receive it all in mercy. In loving kindness. Let the sound of these words pass right through you. Let all that arises pass through the spaciousness of soft belly, touched by mercy and awareness. Floating in the spaciousness of being. And gently let your eyes open. Let them open now. And as your eyes open, notice at what point the belly tightens once again. Even trying to understand can tighten the belly. Being anything but our own great nature tightens us, removes us from the joy of our essential nature. Fills us with mind and confusion tightening the body. Limiting the senses. Soften with the eyes wide open to the world. Notice at what point that someoneness reasserts itself and you feel a need to protect. Send mercy. Send a blessing to that someoneness so in pain. Soften to it. Let it float in who you really are. Softening to the pain we all share. And the legacy of healing exposed in this deep softness.*

*From *Embracing the Beloved* by Stephen and Ondrea Levine*

## *A Meditation: The Temple of Silence*

*Imagine a hill covered with greenery. A path leads to the top, where you can see the Temple of Silence. Give that temple the shape of your highest consciousness: noble, harmonious, and radiant. It is a spring morning, sunny and pleasantly warm. Notice how you are dressed. Become conscious of your body ascending the path, and feel the contact of your feet with the ground. Feel the breeze on your cheeks. Look about you at the trees and the bushes, the grass, and the wildflowers as you go up.*

*You are now approaching the top of the hill. Ageless stillness pervades the atmosphere of the Temple of Silence. No word has even been uttered here. You are close to its big wooden portals: see your hands on them and feel the wood. Before opening the doors, know that when you do so, you will be surrounded by silence. You enter the temple. You feel the atmosphere of stillness and peace all around you. Now you walk forward into the silence, looking about you as you go. You see a big, luminous dome. Its luminosity not only comes from the rays of the sun, but also seems to spring from within and to be concentrated in an area of radiance just in front of you. You enter this luminous silence and feel absorbed by it. Beams of beneficent, warm, powerful light are enveloping you. Let this luminous silence pervade you. Feel it flowing through your veins and permeating every cell in your body.*

*Remain in this luminous silence for two or three minutes, recollected and alert. During this time, listen to the silence. Silence is a living quality, not just the mere absence of sounds. Slowly leave the area of radiance; walk back through the temple and out the portals. Outside, open yourself to the impact of the spring, feel its gentle breeze once more on your cheek, and listen to the singing of the birds.*

*From "What We May Be" by Pierro Ferrucci*

## *A Meditation: The Temple of Silence in a Busy Town*

*Imagine that you are in a busy town. Realize vividly the abundance of stimuli bombarding you as you walk down the street.*

*You see the people and the cars and the signs; you hear the noise of the traffic and the voices; you notice the shop windows, with their varieties of merchandise. You see a newsstand teeming with pictures and titles. You see a florist displaying flowers of all kinds. You may even see people you know amidst the crowd, but they are intent on their own affairs and so pass by without noticing you. You may even see yourself. Then, approaching the very center of this busy town, you come across a building different from the rest. It is the Temple of Silence. In the very midst of the noise and the activity, you have found an island of perfect stillness: inside the temple the silence is so complete and so real that it is almost tangible.*

*As soon as you enter the temple, you are immediately out of the hustle and bustle and immersed in an atmosphere of timeless quiet. The silence that greets and pervades you like a wordless caress easily and effortlessly penetrates the most hidden recesses of your being. You feel this silence soothing you, reaching deeply into the very structures of your mind, liberating you of the hold it may have on you, so that you feel free and all is still. You remain in the silence for a while. You listen to the silence. You become the silence. After a while, you decide to leave the temple and go back to the busy world outside. Finding yourself once again immersed in the traffic and the crowd, you notice how your general feeling is different than before you entered the temple.*

*From "What We May Be" by Pierro Ferrucci*

## *Blossom Meditation*

*Close your eyes if it feels comfortable to you . . .*

*And quietly feel your awareness of being here, sitting on this couch or chair.*

*Sit erect, with the quiet dignity of a queen or a king. Feel your body, as it makes contact with the couch. Feel your arms and legs and feet as they make contact with the couch or floor or other parts of your body. And bring your attention to your breathing,*

*Let your breathing be relaxed and easy.*

*And see if you can keep your attention there . . . On the breath.*

*Be aware of the in breath as it goes all the way in . . .*

*And be aware of the out breath, as it goes all the way out*

*Just relaxed breathing and the awareness of the breathing.*

*And now, let yourself think of walking into a beautiful garden on a pleasant spring day.*

*It's beautiful and peaceful. It's quiet and it's safe.*

*As you walk through the garden, seeing the blossoms and leaves and flowers, you see a very comfortable bed among the leaves,*

*A bed that is very welcoming and appears to be for you.*

*It calls you to rest in the midst of all the beauty and peace. It calls you to rest. To rest.*

*You approach and sit on the edge of the bed.*

*It feels so good that you lie down on your back, looking up at the tree branches overhead and the sky.*

*As you lie there, looking up, you hear the sounds of nature, the breeze in the trees, and water flowing in a nearby brook, birds singing . . . Beautiful restful sounds. The air is warm, but not too warm, it's cool, but not too cool.*

*You have never felt more relaxed and at ease.*

*You are just at peace . . . Letting your breath deepen and your worries and concerns disappear.*

*As you lie there, looking up at high green branches, you see a blossom fall from the tree.*

*It slowly floats and falls and eventually lands softly and beautifully on your abdomen.*

*You are aware of it rising and falling. Raising and falling. Rising slowly as you breathe in,*

*and falling slowly as you breathe out.*

*Just be with this beautiful blossom, raising and falling. Keep your attention on it, all the way up on the in-breath, and all the way down on the out-breath.*

*At times, your attention will be pulled away from your breath, from the blossom. That's OK. That's what minds do. They fly from here to there having thoughts.*

*But when you recognize that that has happened, that your attention is no longer on your breath, just gently bring it back.*

*As many times as your attention strays away from your breathing . . . Gently bring it back that many times. Back to the breath, back to the blossom.*

*When you're very relaxed like this, when your mind and body are one, your inner wisdom is called forth. Your inner wisdom becomes stronger as your mind is present to the rising and falling of your breath, of your blossom.*

*When you are very relaxed like this, when your mind and body are one, the healing energy of the universe comes forth. The healing energy becomes stronger as your mind is present to the rising and falling of your breath, your blossom.*

*Relaxed.*

*Hearing the sounds of nature.*

*Experiencing your own inner wisdom.*

*And allowing the healing. Wave upon wave of healing.*

*And so you remain in the garden.*

*Just being here.*

*Just breathing.*

*Just watching the rising and falling of your breath, your blossom,*

*And returning your attention to the breath every time it leaves.*

*Stay in this place for as long as you like.*

*Then, when you are ready, return your attention to this room.*

*And when it feels right, open your eyes.*

*And remember . . . This peace, this comfort, this wisdom, this healing . . . They're all inside you.*

*You can call them to yourself at any time*