



One Earth Sangha

Envisioning a Positive Future

A Guided Meditation with Diana Winston

Okay, we'll get started. Welcome everyone to our Thursday Mindful Awareness Meditation. I'm Diana Winston. I'm the director of mindfulness education at the Mindful Awareness Research Center over up the street at UCLA. Happy to be here with all of you. We're here to practice mindfulness. We come each week and some of you know this now has been 10 years that we've been coming here and practicing mindfulness in this room, at least some of us. So welcome to the new people and welcome to the returners and Happy New Year if I didn't catch you last week.

I define mindfulness as paying attention to our present moment experiences with openness and curiosity, and a willingness to be with that experience. So how can we show up fully into this present moment with these qualities of openness and curiosity and this willingness to show up for whatever life brings?

So what happens when what life brings isn't so great? How do we show up? Well, mindfulness can actually give us capacity to be with things even when they're difficult. So I'm going to turn a little bit to a somewhat difficult topic, which is, I read an article about climate change that was actually really, really helpful. It was in *The New York Times* this weekend, last weekend, and it was called, I don't know if some of you saw it, hold on, can't get into it. It's called *How to Stop Freaking Out and Tackle Climate Change*. And it gave a set of points about ways of letting go of your own shame and blame for yourself, and finding ways to join effective groups. And, let's see if I can find it. Hold on. Define your role. Find how you can contribute. So there were a lot of different steps she talked about, but the part that I thought



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was most relevant to us here and in meditation is, she said, know what you're fighting for, not just what you're fighting against.

She says, as we fight or as we work to make the world a better place, it's important for our mental health and motivation to have an image in mind of our goal, a realistically good future. She says, her name is Emma Marris, imagine dense, but livable cities veined with public transit and leafy parks, infrastructure humming away to remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. Fake meat that tastes better than the real thing. Species recovering and rewilding the world, the rivers silver with fish. The sky's musical with flocking birds. And she goes on to talk about this vision. And I think that we can get caught in despair quite easily, and we can use our mindfulness practice to be present with it, but we can also use the power of our creativity and our imagination to contemplate the creation of a better world. What do we want to see? And that fuels our ability to be present with what is and to act to make things better.

So we're going to do some basic mindfulness in a moment. And for those of you who thought that's what you signed up for when you showed up, we will be doing that now. But then we'll do a little bit of this kind of visioning of the world we want, at the end, okay.

So just so you can settle back into a comfortable position, taking a few breaths if it's helpful. And as you take these deep breaths, just allowing yourself to settle a little bit, settle into a place of just being here, showing up for yourself.

Your feet can be on the floor.



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Our legs on the chair, just noticing your legs against the chair and your back can be upright, but not too rigid or tight. Hands resting wherever they're comfortable. Most people close their eyes, but you don't have to. If you want to leave your eyes open, that's fine. Just have them looking downward. Not all around the room.

So notice your feet connecting with the floor. Notice the weight of your feet on the floor, the touch. Maybe there's some vibration, some heaviness. Just feel that connection with the ground, our connection to the Earth deep below, below this building.

And feel the place where your thighs make contact with the seat of the chair. There's pressure and heaviness and warmth. Notice your backup against the chair and what that feels like.

Bring your attention into your stomach area. Is your stomach tense or tight? See if you can allow it to soften. You can take a deeper breath.

Notice your hands. Let your hands be soft, might feel vibration or tingling. Warmth, coolness.

Notice your arms and shoulders, relaxing your shoulders. Letting your throat and jaw, face, facial muscles soften. Release any holding, contraction. See if you can just be for a moment here. Just be.

Let's turn our attention to the sounds around us, sounds in the room or beyond. Noticing the sounds as they come and go. Noticing the silence between the sounds,



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... and rather than getting lost in a story like, I like this, or I don't like this. Or, what is that sound? Or why is it happening? See if you can simply listen.

Receive the sound. You don't have to work hard, just listen.

And now letting go of that and bringing your attention into your body. Can you feel your body breathing? Noticing your breath moving through your body? Can you feel your abdomen rising and falling, expanding, and contracting with each breath? Let your breath be natural in and out through your nose.

Notice your chest area. Can you feel your chest rising and falling, expanding and contracting with the breath?

Or maybe you notice the air moving through your nose in and out, tingling, warm, slight movement.

So with mindfulness meditation, it's helpful to find something to focus on. We can use our breath in our abdomen, our chest or our nose, or if you like listening to sounds that we did before, you could do that. Pick whatever is the clearest or the easiest. If you can't decide, they all work equally well, you can just pick one.

So let's begin the practice of noticing moment after moment, breath after breath, or sound after sound. When breath ends, the next breath begins and we just stay present for it, feeling it or listening.

As you do this, it's likely that your attention begins to wander. You start to think about other things, planning, remembering, imagining. When this happens, you're



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not doing anything wrong. It's completely normal. When you notice your attention's wandered, you can say a soft word in your mind like thinking or wandering, and then gently redirect your attention right back to your main focus. Just the breath in one of those areas or the listening to sounds. And then you keep doing that again and again. Get lost in thought. You notice it, come back.

You can say a soft word like thinking or wandering when you get lost, and then come back to the breathing or the listening. For those of you with more experience you know that when things pull you away, you can bring your attention to whatever has pulled you away. Emotions, body sensations, thoughts. Sometimes we let go of our meditation focus, our anchor, completely and we just notice what happens moment after moment. And sometimes we have a more natural awareness where we're simply just being, resting, connecting with the awareness that's already present. So I'm going to stop talking and for the next period of time, you'll practice this on your own.

<silence>

As we continue meditating, we're just going to spend a little time imagining a future that's really the future we want to see, the future that holds our values and our hopes for this planet. And as we imagine now, some people might find that they see things, some may find that they sense or feel. And there's no right way to do this. We're just going to let our imaginations go a little bit. And so see if you can bring to mind a future that you want to see, a future of clean air and saved old



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growth trees and no longer endangered species and humans living in harmony without violence, without war.

And so there might be some area in the world that's so important to you, so you can think about, what would that look like? What would it look like if I could have the future I want to see for this world? The end of racism and inequality. Clean water. Water for everyone on this planet.

Imagine your children and grandchildren and great-great-grandchildren or great nieces and nephews, or the children having an amazing, amazing planet in the future where they're connected to this Earth and it's healthy and they're healthy and strong and thriving with all the species on this planet.

And as you imagine this, just notice how you're feeling inside. Notice what's happening. And if there's a sense of hope, possibility, happiness, really let that be here. Let that fully, let it grow. Let it expand.

And if you're feeling something else like, oh no, this isn't possible, or despair, or disbelief, see if you can just be present with that feeling, letting it be here, but also knowing that we don't know. We don't know the future. And we do have the capacity to make change.

So one last moment of this imagined future. Noticing again, how it feels inside you. Letting whatever is here, be here.



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And we can always say, for whatever it is I'm feeling, may I hold this with kindness, with awareness, whatever it may be. And take a breath or two. Feel your feet on the floor, and whenever you're ready, you can open your eyes or end the meditation.

Thank you for going here with me today. This article that I read that I spoke about in the beginning, she feels very strongly that it's so important for our mental health and wellbeing to imagine a positive future and not get lost in the despair.