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File 2a – Saturday morning guided meditation

So take a few deep breaths into the belly and feel your body sitting here in this room right now. This is where you are. Don't worry about who you are; the question is, "Where are you?" I'll keep saying this again and again and again. Right now it's obvious you're here in your body. But each time you start to think, you're not here. And the more grounded in your body you become, the more clearly you see how little you are here.

That's what meditation is about. It's not necessarily sitting here with no thoughts. You can be in a very deep state and working very hard to be in your body, because the mind will not give up easily. And this is something that you can't talk yourself out of. So this practice is all about the body – your body, your attachment to your body. And to really go deeply into the body you need to be brave, because you'll start to feel the pain that you've been repressing all your life. It can feel at times like you're coming out of a dream – you're starting to wake up from a dream-like state. It's not always comfortable doing this but you do start to feel more alive.

So take your attention to the top of your head and feel the sensation on the top of your head however it feels. How it feels is not important. What we're doing here is using the senses to be in the body. Feel the sensation of the eye lids on the eyes. Feel your breath going through your nostrils, your mouth, your lips. Feel your tongue touching your palate.

Feel your shoulders – really feel them. Go to your left shoulder and go down your arm to your left elbow and feel your elbow. Then go down to your left hand and feel you hand, and feel you thumb and each finger. Keep breathing into the belly using your breath as an anchor in the body. Then take your attention to you right shoulder and feel your shoulder. And go down your arm to your right elbow and then down your right hand and feel your thumb and each finger. Feel both arms and both hands.

Then take your attention to your chest, and as you breathe in and out through the nose, feel the gentle movement of your chest with the breath. Then go down to the abdomen, the place that many people avoid because this is where you really feel disturbance, this is where you feel fear, so it's a very effective place to come back to. It's a very tangible place to feel the breath. You can feel the abdomen rising and falling as your body is breathing. It's a very definite movement. This is your home base. It's not your focus but the attention does keep coming back to the breath in the abdomen.

Feel your thighs, your left knee and your right knee, your left foot and your right foot. Then feel your spine from the top of the spine down the back to the bottom of the spine. So every now and again you might need to gently straighten your spine. This will keep you more alert and allow the energy to flow more freely through your body. Then again feel your whole body.

The practice is very simple. It's not easy, none of this is easy. Each time you realise you're not in your body, which means you've been lost in thinking, pretending that you're somewhere else doing something else, when actually the fact is you're sitting here – each time you realise you've been thinking, bring your attention back to your body, primarily the breath in the abdomen.

The breath becomes your mantra, your body becomes your mantra – your living, breathing mantra. So this is what we're doing here, being in the body as much as possible, coming back the breath again and again and again. You're going to try to justify your thinking. You're going to say, "I need to be thinking about this right now," whereas the truth is there's nothing you need to be thinking about right now. Thinking is not going to solve anything.

So sit and watch. Try and have as few expectations as possible going into a sitting, as few judgments as possible. And counting the breath can be a really valuable exercise, a way of adding an extra anchor in the body. So you need to count with the body, from the abdomen. It's not an intellectual exercise.

So you breathe in through the nose and as you breathe out you silently count from the abdomen. You breathe in, and as you breathe out you silently count, "one." You breathe in, "two." So it's a very body-based counting, it's almost like the breath is counting. If you can get to ten without losing count go back to one again. But really it's a way of seeing clearly how much thinking goes on and how easily you can get lost.

It can take a lot of persistence but it can also be a very profound practice. So it's good to use it at the beginning of a sitting, or particularly when your mind is very busy. It can add just that extra anchor.