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Guided meditation: Being and wanting

How are you this morning? What kind of day is this feeling like so far? Maybe it already has a strong tone to it, maybe it's still quite amorphous, not become anything much yet.

Let's start by asking how things are for you right now in three senses: in your body, in your mind, and in your environment.

Let's begin with the body.

If you can, begin to walk, really really slowly, in steps as small as you like. Indoors or out, you don't need much space for this. You can walk in a smallish circle if need be.

Before altering anything about your body, your task is simply to notice it. You can notice the way your feet and toes scrunch and curl to propel you forwards, and your calves, and your hamstrings at the back of your thighs, up into your glutes, and the point where your arse transitions into your lower back, and the hollow there, and the way the muscles around the back of your ribcage shift with each step to stabilize you, and how your lats compress a little on the side where the arm is swinging back, and what your neck feels like at the top of all of this, whether stiff or mobile, and what kind of support it is to your skull, where the

highest of the vertebrae meets the occipital bone at the base of your skull.

And you can scan back down, through the many many muscles of your face and how they're responding to every slightest shift in your physical position and whatever your thoughts or emotions are doing, and then through your throat and how the space at the base of it contracts if your head tilts forwards, and how your shoulders and chest and tummy are responding to the air that's coming into and out of your lungs, and how the angle changes between your torso and your thighs when you step forward, and how your quads at the front of your thighs draw in with each step and your shins stabilize down back through into your feet.

And some of this may feel uncomfortable, you may find yourself attaching judgements to some of it, but here it is, here you are, doing a slowed-down version of one of the most basic human movements. However you're doing it, it's OK.

And maybe, too, it can be helped to feel even more than OK. Maybe you can find a little greater ease, or energy, or whatever else you may want right now.

Maybe it will feel good to encourage your spine to be tall and upright and to let your



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neck be a seamless extension of it, and to let your skull float light as a balloon on top of it. It may feel good to open your palms forwards and feel the opening in your chest and middle as you do. You may like to place your feet a little wider as they step forward, to give your hips a little more space, and then to play a little with lifting your heels just a fraction later on each step, peeling them off the ground a little later, and feel how that changes the way your calves and glutes get involved and how your centre of gravity changes. And you may like to make a point of engaging your glutes with each step, feeling how the biggest muscle in your body propels your body forwards. And you may like to make a point of keeping your shoulders low as you breathe, so your belly expands with the breath rather than your shoulders rising. And maybe now you feel a little different, and maybe some of this different also feels in some way “better”. Or maybe not.

Maybe the better and the worse and the “I wish this were different” are a big part of your thoughts right now. What else is there? When other thoughts are popping into mind in between your attention to these words, what kind of thing are they about? Are they about you or other people, your recent past or near future or something more distant, about something not at all about you, about a friend or about something you read in the news... What is this mental stuff right now all about?

And then, alongside their aboutness, what other qualities do these thoughts have? Are they bound up with emotions and moods and other kinds of feeling? Are they rushing along hectically or dragging sluggishly? Do they feel anxious or calm and measured? Do they have happiness attached or sadness or neither? Is there haziness in them or sharpness or some strange mixture...?

Now, when a thought comes, maybe don't push it away instantly. Be with it for a while, if you like, before letting it go. The next will be along soon enough.

And now maybe get a bit more curious. See if you can catch what happens when a thought arises: Out of what? Into what? Is there a transitional time where a thought has half arisen? Can you dismiss it then already, or by the time you've decided to dismiss it has it already happened? Does one thought leave only when another shoves it out of the way, or is there sometimes a truly empty space (if it feels at all like a spatial thing) between them? Or do you sometimes have two at once? Or more? Or are they interwoven like double and triple and infinite helixes? Maybe not just with each but also with the ways your muscles are moving and your air is coming and leaving and the way your surroundings change every time you do?

And so now let's allow the focus to broaden. This is less me me me now, this is you expanding out into everything else.



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What is there here, where you are? It's hard to answer this question all at once, so let's start with colours: What colours can you see? What labels come to mind for them, or don't?

And now what about textures. Do they have easy labels, like hard or soft, jagged or smooth, knobbly or polished... Maybe not really, but maybe as you see them you're imagining touching them—what would you feel? Maybe try actually reaching out and touching something—how does it feel?

And now shift your focus from textures to shapes: What is here? What straight lines and curves are there, what angles, how do the light and the shadow hit or caress things and give them new shapes?

And now moving away from the visual: What sounds are present to you, intense or gentle, annoying or pleasant, near or far, coming from your body or not...

What can you smell? Can you smell anything coming from yourself? Anything that comes to you on the air from elsewhere? What can you learn from what your olfactory sense is telling you, right now, about yourself and anything else?

And where smell meets taste: How does the air taste? How does your mouth taste? If you swallow, what changes?

And where ground meets feet: How does it feel? How does it feel at the start of the step and in the middle and at the end?

So, body, mind, world. This is how they are right now. Let all these impressions coalesce, or just coexist, or come in and out of the foreground or the background, if these exist.

This is what your day is right now. This interaction of body, mind, and world. That's all.

This is really all part of the same system, which we divide up in this kind of way for ease.

This system is existing, it is doing its thing with you at the centre of it—or feeling like you're at the centre, when actually you're wherever you happen to be, neither centre nor periphery, because where even are the boundaries?

And this system is existing, and it is currently your day.

And then—well, then there's the kind of day you want this to be.

Maybe there's nothing you want to be different than it is – in which case, your task is to observe the full alignment of what is and what you want.



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But maybe there's a gap: Maybe you have a feeling about how you want to be feeling right now or in an hour, after breakfast, after lunch, before bed, as you fall asleep.

If so, let that desire crystallize. Will it take verbal form?

Is it a big bold unreasonable desire?

Is it a hesitant almost-not-worth-mentioning little instinct?

What does this desire do when you acknowledge it?

Does it shift your body into wanting to get on with certain things or very much not wanting to get on with other things, ready itself for action, move towards or away from certain things?

Does it invite your mind to start entertaining different thoughts, like your to-do list for today or what you didn't do yesterday?

Does it draw some items in the world to your attention: things you want to change or are annoyed or pleased by?

These instincts are how your desire is manifesting right now, today—how it's having effects—or or maybe these instincts are the manifestation of something else that is generating both the desire and these other effects

And they may be good effective instincts about how to get the kind of day you want, the kind of feeling you want, or they may be red herrings, things you're only sliding into because you've done them too often and they feel like the only option, or like the easiest option, or the best option—again, they may or may not be, and it's often hard to tell.

For now, it doesn't matter.

For now, what you're doing is sitting with—no, moving with—the coexistence of what there is here and what you want. And if we do a dizzying zoom out to outer space where all us homo sapiens are even tinier than tiny little dots rushing around on the surface of this globe, we see that this is what we're all doing, what we've all been doing since the day there were humans to do anything: balancing acceptance with desire, acknowledgement of what is with acknowledgement of what could be. And both are necessary, both are good, neither is something to push away. Even when the reality feels appalling and the desire seems hopeless. Even when what could be is intoxicating and what is feels like suffocation. Even when reality feels so self-sufficient that there's no space for any desire. Even when the only desire is for nothing to ever change because this right now feels perfect and nothing else is even tolerable to contemplate. Even when the balance between accepting and dreaming feels precarious or impossible or meaningless.



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All of human progress has come from not only accepting—and from accepting enough.

And it is never easy, the in-between.

But what you are practising right now is how to respect reality and honour the dream—whether or not it comes fully true, today or ever.

It's in the nature of desires that we don't fully realize them. It's also in the nature of desires that letting them be voiced gives them a chance—and it's in their nature that the desiring is already part of the fulfilment, the longing is the pleasure, the loving is the happiness quite apart from its reciprocation.

So here you are, doing this momentous thing.

And in this mixture, your day will play out, already is playing out.

And it probably won't be a perfect day, or even a perfect morning, whatever the hell that is.

But it may be a slightly different day and morning for having sharpened your focus on this infinite interplay of being and wanting.

So, have whatever kind of day this turns into.