



One Earth Sangha

# Befriending

A Guided Meditation with Lama Willa Blythe Baker

*This is a transcript of a guided meditation from Session Five of the [EcoSattva Training - A Brave and Tender Reckoning](#).*

I'd like to introduce you all to a practice for befriending our eco anxiety. And I call this practice Befriending. And you can use it with other emotions that come up around climate change. You can use it with anger, you can use it with despair, with sadness. But today I'll introduce it as a practice of befriending the anxiety that we feel when we think about the state of the planet and the possible future that we're living into.

And so, of course, our usual way of relating to our anxiety is to want to make it go away. To want to fix it. And we have our various strategies of numbing, soothing, suppressing, avoiding, and of course a favorite one, distracting ourselves from the anxiety. But we actually have an alternative, which is to gently and compassionately make space for what it is that we're feeling. And I want to say in the beginning, there's a tremendous payoff for making space for these feelings that we have in response to climate change.

And that payoff includes being able to allow our feelings to be as a natural part of what it means to be human, so a reframing of those feelings. And the possibility of following the feeling, staying with it long enough that we notice, oh, this is what so many others feel too. We begin to follow the thread of the feeling from heartbreak and heart contraction into heart opening and into connection.



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And of course, there's also the payoff of normalizing these parts of ourself as an unavoidable dimension of being human, being the wild animals that we are. And as we get more accepting of all of those parts of ourselves, we live with a lot more ease. What we struggle with becomes stronger. What we love and accept becomes our ally. So we are learning to become allies to these natural and human feelings, responses that we have to climate change.

So the practice that I'm about to lead you through, a contemplative practice, will be about 15 to 20 minutes of sitting with, and we'll be taking ourselves through five steps to befriending our eco anxiety. And those steps are first to pause, second to notice, third to breathe, fourth to surround, and the fifth to befriend. And so I'm just naming them here so that later as you begin to do the practice and become capable of guiding yourself through the practice, you can remember, oh, these are the five, remember to pause, to notice, to breathe, to surround, and then to befriend.

So I invite you to take your seat for practice and find yourself in your practice space. And just by virtue here of slowing down and coming down from our thinking mind into the body, we are pausing business as usual, to be present, to be attentive, to come home to the body, home to present moment. Now coming down into this feeling body, noticing what's present. This subtle anxiety that we are carrying under the surface, this fear for our planet, this very natural fear for our loved ones, for the future generations, for the plants and animal worlds. And as you notice that undercurrent, paying attention to where and how that feels in your body right now. You might feel it as a tightening in the shoulders, heaviness of the heart and subtle feeling, and the belly, whatever you notice, just paying attention. How does this eco anxiety live in my body right now?



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Now that you've found it in your body, move on to taking a deep, cool inbreath, breathing space around this feeling, your beautiful feeling. And as you exhale, feeling the space around that feeling, just breathing, openness, inhaling openness space, exhaling openness space. And you might want to say to your feeling of eco anxiety, you are welcome here. I will not try to avoid you. I'll not try to suppress you. I will make room for you. Come along and practice with me. You might notice now how your feeling of anxiety, dread, fear, how it responds to being welcomed.

Now on your next inhale, breathe compassionate attention into the space you've created around your beautiful feeling in the body. Breathing in this warm, attentive, loving energy to surround your beautiful feeling as you breathe.

Welcoming it. Now in your mind's eye, you might reach out with your hand towards your beautiful feeling, this beautiful feeling, and befriend. And if your hand is drawn to your belly or to your heart, wherever you've been feeling this anxiety, you can let your physical hand move there, placing it on your torso. Befriend. There's nothing whatsoever that you need to do here other than welcome and befriend.

Come alongside like a good friend might come alongside and just be present to. And it might be that your eco anxiety has a story to tell. And if you're noticing it's trying to tell you the story, breathing space and compassionate presence around that story, welcoming that too. You can come here and have a seat here too. Let's all be present together. Befriend.

[bell]