



One Earth Sangha

Rest in the Grace of the World

Nature Meditation on Calm and Peace

This is a meditation featured in Mark Coleman's book, [A Field Guide to Nature Meditation: 52 Mindfulness Practices for Joy, Wisdom and Wonder](#).

Morning friends, nice to see you. Nice to be with you this morning. Chilly, foggy morning here. Calling from Sausalito, Northern California, unceded Miwok land. So I noticed this morning as I woke up, so I have a view of water, which is very blessing, and one of the things I notice about being in the presence of water, but also just in the morning in general, and also with the fog where I live, one of the things that strikes me is we go outside, as we step outside, or look outside or feel the influence of the outdoors, one of the things I was encouraging, I encourage everybody to do that, but encouraging my teacher trainees, but also any student, but particularly during this time, to recommend going outside if weather allows. One of the reasons for that is that when we do, we tap into different qualities, different qualities than we might feel necessarily indoors because we start to feel the influence of the more-than-human world, of the natural world, of the trees, of the clouds, of the sky, of the rain, the forest, the garden, the birds, flowers, whatever it is that you're around.

And one of those qualities that I think is particularly important in these times when so many of us are dealing with stress, and a sense of time scarcity and pressures and anxiety or fears, uncertainty, is to feel the influence of the calming quality of the natural world.



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How many of you feel more peaceful or calm or quiet outdoors? It's kind of almost a no brainer. It's like it's one of those primary qualities. We also feel many other things, we feel invigorated or inspired or connected or heartfelt, bodied sensory. One of the qualities I think that is very helpful to tune into is the peace that exudes from stone, from rocks, from trees, plants, from water, clouds, and to let ourselves feel that, feel that influence, feel how that resonates in the body, and how that calms.

A beautiful line from John O'Donohue. He says, take refuge in your senses, open up to the way of rain. He goes on to say, draw alongside the calmness of stone, the stillness of stone until its calmness can claim you, draw alongside the calmness of stone or the calmness of trees until the stillness can claim you. Such a beautiful sentiment.

So when we bring this mindful awareness outside where we're open, sensitive, receptive, then we can feel that calmness, stillness of peace, of ease washing in us, through us.

So there's a lovely poem from Wendell Berry, he's a farmer, poet, from Kentucky, writes about that, talking about a typical night where one might feel stress, where he wakes up in the night as we can so often do with anxiety. And he says, when I wake in the night at the least sound in fear of what my life and my children's lives may become, I go outside and lie down where the wood drake rests his quiet beauty on the water, where the great heron feeds. I come into the presence of wild things who do not tax their life with forethought of grief. I come into the presence of day-blind stars waiting with their light. For a time I rest in the grace of the world and am free.



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So this is what we do. This is why we go outside, to come into the grace of the world. We come into the presence of wild things who aren't taxing their lives, who aren't worrying about thoughts, future thoughts of grief, of woe, of whatever, in the presence of day-blind stars. For a time I rest in the grace of the world and I'm free. So whether you're indoors or outdoors, we can still feel the influence of the natural world, particularly if you're indoors and by a window or an open door, just sensing the gardens, trees, forests, sky, breeze, rain, whatever it is that you are around. Of course, if we are outside, we can tend to feel more of that influence and the wilder the place, normally we feel the profundity of that. My favorite place to feel that is in the desert, the stillness of a desert, but equally in a forest, equally sitting here on my rooftop by the oak tree, the redwood tree.

So as we sit this morning, we can incline in our practice to various qualities, can't necessarily make them arise, can't force them. It's not about that, but about turning our attention to seeing these qualities of presence and how they can be invited to strengthen. So right now, as you take your seat, allowing your body to come into stillness, ... the stillness of stone, the stillness of the Earth...

and as you come into your familiar sitting posture, whatever posture you're in, come to stillness, feeling into that stillness of body, feeling into the stillness of the Earth on which you are sitting, resting on.

<silence>

Notice if there's any influence of calm or peace. Perhaps the stillness of morning, perhaps the silence between sounds.



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<silence>

And of course if that isn't present, we notice that or we notice what is here in its place, whatever the experience of phenomena is here. Maybe you feel the absence of calm, maybe you feel restless or agitated, troubled. Notice that. And at the same time, we're also including noticing, inclining to what does allow stillness, calm, ease. What happens when we turn our attention to feeling, receiving, absorbing the rhythm of breath. Simple movement of life.

We feel the releasing quality of the exhale. Pause between breaths, stillness.

At times we may notice ease, stillness with that simplicity of breath.

Body breathing itself, letting awareness, resting in the physicality of body, sitting in stillness, in the stillness of the Earth.

<silence>

Including the soundscape, silence, sounds appearing and disappearing. At times, sounds can also evoke a sense of ease or wellbeing. Calm, sound of rain, sound of familiarity, birdsong, sounds of morning activity, human activity.

<silence>

You also may notice how one of the quickest interruptions to peace, to calm, as Wendell Barry was pointing to, is when our thoughts whip us up into thoughts



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about the future, trigger anxiety or fear or worry or planning or excitement or anticipation. So noticing when thoughts arise and we attend to them, how they can lift us literally out of the present into some imaginary world, that's often more fraught.

Now, the present moment, the simplicity of the present moment is usually more easeful, more calming, more peaceful, not always.

And so continuing to unhook from the thoughts that arise, noticing them, releasing them, continuing to return here, body sitting on the still Earth, breath coming and going like waves, sounds and silence, the heart ebbing and flowing. This way we practice together.

<silence>

So we continue to practice and noticing what allows calm, ease, peace to be known, to be felt. Stillness of the Earth, quiet of the morning, soothing rhythm of breath, comfort of sounds,

<silence>

Continuing to disengage. Thoughts that arise can so easily trigger the opposite of calm, ease.

<silence>



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And the last few minutes of the sitting. Noticing what supports calm or ease in the heart and the body, in the mind.

Feeling the natural ease of the present moment, spaciousness of awareness, calmness of ground. Calmness in the depths of your own being.

And then you bring the practice to close. Just noticing where you are, the influence of sitting in stillness, inside, outside, inclining to this quality. As I said, not necessarily meaning this quality will arise, but at least giving some space for it to be known.

<silence>

And as we bring our practice to a close, opening your eyes, taking in wherever you are, taking in the influence of the natural world.

Registering if this practice has evoked some ease, some peace and quiet. Sensing that in your body, noticing that you can bring that quality or attune to that quality, attune to that quality and environment around you. It's always available.