

Daily Calm: Anxiety - Transcript

Welcome to this experiential practice where we'll be working with the anxious mind.

Let's start by taking a comfortable position where you feel supported.

Close your eyes, and let your arms rest in an easeful way.

Feel the points of contact and support with the chair or the floor.

And allow yourself to fully relax.

Keep your back tall, your face soft.

And once you're settled in take a few full deep breaths.

Inhaling deeply ... and exhaling slowly.

Filling the chest and lungs up with air... and then releasing a very slow outbreath so you can feel the sensations of the breath as it's released.

And now let the breath find it's natural rhythm.

Feel it moving in and out of the body.

Holding the breath very gently. You don't want to squeeze it with concentration.

And if thoughts arise, observe them as though you were sitting by a river bank and watching leaves flow down the river. Remain on the sidelines as a witness, observing the water and watching whatever it carries downstream but without getting caught up in it.

Let thoughts flow in, and watch them drift away.

In the same way you watch the breath flow in and then pass away again and again.

And there's a good chance you've been pulled away by thought. Some of those thoughts may have been worries or anxious thoughts so it's a useful practice to learn how to let thoughts come and go without getting swept away.

With anxiety, our general habit is to react, to get caught up in the undertow, and taken on a ride. So we want to learn how to calm the mind and become less reactive to anxiety.

But it's also helpful to turn towards our anxiety at times.

So now that the mind has settled, in this safe space, we'll begin a practice that helps us turn towards our anxiety.

To start, allow an anxious thought your holding to surface.

It can be something that came up in practice, or an anxious thought you had earlier in the week. Perhaps something small for today so that you learn to work in this way slowly. Just allow a moderate concern to arise in your mind. Not the deepest anxiety of your life, a minor concern or worry.

Now notice where you feel that anxiety in the body. There's always a physical sensation connected with an anxious thought. It's sometimes in the chest, other times in the tummy, you might feel it anywhere. Locate where your anxiety is being held in this moment.

Now tune into the sensation. Feel it. Stay with it and notice it's shape, it's size, it's texture, it's color, connect with the felt sense of it in your body

Now notice, what is the feeling associated with it? Is there anger, fear, sadness or shame? Just see what's here.

Now, listen to what this emotion is trying to tell you? Allow it to be an open ended question and just hear what arises.

Now having listened to what the emotion is trying to tell you, see if there's anything you can say to calm it. Knowing that our anxious thoughts are often exaggerated fears. And we never really know how life will evolve. And if you don't notice a magnification of thought, simply acknowledge the emotion. So if you're holding fear, you would say, I see you are afraid. Of course you are afraid. And It's okay.

Take a minute to calm or affirm whatever feeling you're experiencing in this moment.

Now provide some reassurance- telling that part of you that it's not alone.

I've seen you.

We'll figure this out.

We'll get through this.

Offer a bit of reassurance to that part of you.

If it's possible, allow your worries to rest now, knowing that they've been acknowledged. And understanding our biggest worries rarely manifest. There are always steps that can be taken and although not all answers arise immediately, with time they will come. So as a last step, rest your attention on the area of your heart.

Acknowledge the courage it takes to face difficult emotions, and to send yourself gentle waves of loving kindness.

Allow the feeling of peace and compassion to shower your whole body as you take these next few breaths.

Anxiety is something that impacts millions of people each day. When we experience it we're often swept away by negative thoughts of the future, and this leads to emotional responses like fear, sadness or anger, as well as behavioral responses like avoiding situations or lashing out reactively. It's hard to problem solve when we're swept away by an anxious mind.

But anxiety can be a teacher so we want to hear what it has to say, and tend to it gently so it doesn't overwhelm us.

Mindfulness offers us the opportunity to learn how to listen to anxiety, and respond to it in a more skillful way.

When we hear what our anxiety has to say in a safe space, with a calm mind, we can offer it reassurance and release it.

As Christopher L. Bennett said, "The things that trouble our spirits are within us already. In meditation, we must face them, accept them, and set them aside one by one."

And as we approach the end of the session, gently bring your attention back to your surroundings. Sounds. The texture of the surface below you. The smell of the air. Notice how your body feels. When you're ready open your eyes.

I hope you enjoyed today's daily Calm. Have a great day and we'll see you back here tomorrow.