

Martine Batchelor
Meditation Month 2019: Four Practices for a Firm Foundation
Week 2: "Listening with Compassion"
March 8, 2019



Hello. I am Martine Batchelor and this year I am the teacher for Tricycle Meditation Month. Thank you for joining me in my home in Southern France, and congratulations on finishing the first week of your commitment to sitting each day during the month of March.

In this series of four guided meditation videos we are going back to the basics of meditation, so you can develop a stable foundation that you can return to for the rest of your life. I hope the first week went well and that you're beginning to see the benefit of this daily practice. If you missed it, it's not too late. You'll find a link to the first video on this page.

Last week we explored the basis of Buddhist meditation through breath and body meditation, which included mindfulness and looking deeply. I gave a little homework, which was the short breath stop, and also just being aware of change. How did you find that? Did you find that the breath stop helped you to be calm? And did you find that actually through the looking deeply into the change, you had a different relationship to your sensation?

In week two, we're going to look at listening meditation, which can help us to cultivate receptivity and allow us to develop a wise and compassionate attitude towards ourselves and others in daily life. When we're meditating, a friendly, caring, and gentle mindfulness will be our anchor. Meditation can be a little difficult at times, so it's very important not to be hard on ourselves. Whether we still have a lot of thoughts, or we are a little sleepy, or if we missed a day, it doesn't matter. We do the best we can within the conditions. What is really helpful is having a friendly attitude and then starting again.

Last week we were doing mindfulness of the breath and mindfulness of the body, and so this week is a little bit more personal. It involves us. What is interesting with listening meditation is that it's a different type of anchor. It's a wide-open anchor. It's helping us to be receptive. We sit here, and we just listen to the sound of the world so we can anchor into it. We can either focus on the space within which the sound will appear, or our attention might go to one specific sound. The sound goes, and then our attention might go to the next specific sound.

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Please don't worry about "Oh, should I go to this sound or that one?" Just let your attention take you to whatever sound comes. We try to listen to the sound as sound. We're not trying to describe or note the sound; we're just trying to listen to the sound as it arises and as it disappears. In a way, trying to hear the sound for itself. Then again, we don't all have the same listening acuity, and you don't have all the same sounds around you, so I hope you can make this meditation can work for you.

As a final point, you're not trying to analyze a sound, and we're not trying to list all the sounds that we're going to hear. We just want to be aware of sound and be receptive to sound, and notice that we cannot control it. So we just wait, and it might appear or it might not. The sounds change, and you can notice how the sounds change, whether they come, they go, or they change within themselves.

Let's try it out.

Finding a comfortable posture. Again, trying to be upright, the shoulders relaxed, the hands as they feel comfortable. The eyes as they feel comfortable, maybe closed or half-closed, whatever suits you. But a friendly gaze if they're open and a friendly, light closing if they're closed.

Then we can combine this with the breath. We could start with being first aware of the breath. Maybe be aware of a few breaths first. The breath coming in, the breath going out. Then we can have the breath in the background and the sound in the foreground.

First we can focus on the space surrounding us in which sounds might happen or not, so create a wide-open receptive awareness. Be open to whatever arises with a friendly awareness. If there is a sound, just be aware of sounds as they appear and disappear.

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If we become distracted, we gently come back to listening. If around you there is a relatively continuous sound, as long as you hear it be present with it. We're trying to develop a listening mindfulness that is receptive and compassionate.

Having patience with ourselves as we listen mindfully. Noticing that when we're distracted and suddenly hear the sound, the sound can actually be like a bell of mindfulness. It will bring us back to this whole experience right now.

Listening to sounds without grasping or rejecting any sound. Listening to the music of life with a friendly mindfulness. Coming back to hearing and listening with receptivity. Coming back to a certain compassion for everything that is alive right now.

Listening to the sounds of the world, listening to the music of life. As we sit here, we might also be talking to ourselves. Can we talk kindly to ourselves in our thoughts? Can we listen kindly to ourselves too?

Coming back to listening with this friendly mindfulness. If a sound is continuous, we could go inside the sound and notice does it change within itself? Listening to the sound of the world, the music of life with compassion and receptivity.

Thank you.

I would just like to say a few words about how this meditation can really help in daily life with meditative creative listening. How do we listen? There's three ways that we can listen to others. We might be just waiting for them to stop talking because we're going to say something so much more interesting, or we might listen and look in the right direction, but think of something else. When they ask us, "What do you think?" we have no idea what they said. Or the third way is we listen and we grasp what they said, and we amplify it.

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With the help of this meditation practice, I would recommend meditative, compassionate, creative listening. Can you listen to the person totally, giving all of your attention? What is interesting is that if we do that, when they stop talking we generate something that is so much more appropriate, beneficial, and relevant in response. I really hope that this practice can help you to do that.

This listening meditation can be very useful in daily life, and this is why I would like to suggest two small pieces of extra homework. One is to listen to someone. Can we listen to someone with this compassionate receptive listening we were doing during the guided meditation? Then the second part of this extra homework is to see if from time to time can you just listen to the sounds around you as if you were listening to the music of life?

Thank you for listening and thank you for all your efforts to practice daily until the end of March, and really try as you can. Remember to be friendly, and please have a good practice. Goodbye.