

Martine Batchelor
Four Practices for a Firm Foundation
Week Four: “Practicing with Joy and Gratitude”
March 22, 2019



Hello, how are you? I am Martine Batchelor, and I am the Tricycle Meditation Month teacher this year. This is the fourth and final video of our series. We’ve been developing four practices for a firm foundation, looking at the fundamentals of meditation in order to develop a solid foundation for a daily practice.

So far we've explored breath and body meditation, listening meditation, and last week we covered mindfulness of feeling tone. We’ve put in hours of homework, really trying to do mindfulness of feeling tone in terms of visual contact in the supermarket, in the street, in nature—places where you're able to notice the tonality. Did that help your relationship to what you saw and how you perceived it?

In this final week we will learn another meditation, which is a compliment to everything we have done before. For this last meditation I would like to introduce appreciative joy, or altruistic joy.

This is a different type of anchoring and a different type of looking deeply. To anchor in this meditation, we're going to use phrases, and these are the phrases I would like to suggest: “Appreciating my efforts, appreciating this effort, appreciating your effort. Rejoicing in my happiness, rejoicing in this happiness, rejoicing in your happiness. Being grateful for my existence, being grateful for this existence, being grateful for your existence or your potential.”

We have these phrases, and we're going to recite them inwardly and silently. We're going to focus them on ourselves first, then to the people who are around us, then we will focus on everything that is alive around us: the trees, the people, and the animals.

Then we’ll go to the category of people we like and who support us, then to the category of people we feel neutral about, and then we'll come back to ourselves. There are three ways we can do this practice, which I will demonstrate in the guided meditation. You can just recite the sentences, which is a good anchoring device, or you can fully connect to the experience by asking, “What is it I can appreciate now?” Or you can connect to the quality—how does it feel to appreciate something, to be grateful?

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Shall we start? Find a comfortable posture where the back is straight, the shoulders are open, and where you feel stable, grounded, and open at the same time as we sit here. We bring our awareness to ourselves and we look beyond what we might like or dislike about ourselves. We bring this appreciative joy to ourselves.

“Appreciating my effort, rejoicing in this happiness, being grateful for this existence. Appreciating this effort, rejoicing in my happiness, being grateful for this existence.”

Or we can turn to our experience: What is it that I can appreciate right now? What is it that I can rejoice in? What is it that I can be grateful for?

Or we can turn toward the quality: How does it feel to appreciate? How does it feel to rejoice? How does it feel to be grateful?

Now we open our awareness to the lives around us, whether they be trees, animals, or people. Looking beyond what we might like or dislike about them and just touching these lives, reaching these beings who want to live.

“Appreciating your efforts, rejoicing in your development, being grateful for your potential. Appreciating your efforts, rejoicing in your growth, being grateful for your potential.”

Then expanding our friendly awareness to people we like who support us, but looking beyond what we like about them and reaching out to the person who is alive, who is breathing. “Appreciating your efforts, rejoicing in your happiness, being grateful for your existence.”

Now expanding our awareness to people we don't know very much. We feel fairly neutral about them, maybe a little indifferent. But looking beyond this indifference, reaching out to the human being who is alive, who is breathing, who is suffering like us. “Appreciating your efforts, rejoicing in your understanding, being grateful for your potential. Appreciating your efforts, rejoicing in your understanding, being grateful for your potential.”

Now, coming back to ourselves. Looking beyond what we might like or dislike about ourselves. “Appreciating my efforts, rejoicing in my happiness, being grateful for my potential.”

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Can I appreciate my breath right now? Can I appreciate my feet right now? Can I appreciate this body right now? Can I appreciate hearing? Can I appreciate thinking? Can I appreciate being aware in a friendly, clear way?

Thank you.

Buddha developed this practice as an antidote to envy. Personally, I see this practice as very helpful in term of our negative bias. We're so much more aware of unpleasant feeling tones, we notice them very quickly. This is not to say there are no unpleasant feeling tones. Of course we are aware of them and we need to be. But this practice really helps us to balance being aware of unpleasant feeling tones with becoming as aware of pleasant feeling tones, so that there is a balance.

We also need to see that pleasant feeling tone and unpleasant feeling tone are conditioned are changing. I hope this practice was helpful for you right now and might be helpful for you in the future.

With these four practices, you now have a solid basis to develop your practice even further. But you can also see which practice is more beneficial for the cushion, which practice is best for daily life, and what are the conditions that are more propitious for each practice. I hope they will really help you to continue to practice every day.

I would like to talk a little bit about how to continue with your practice in daily life. Just a few tips. You may want to try to practice every day, but do what is possible for you: 10 minutes, 15 minutes, 30 minutes, morning, lunchtime, evening, whatever makes sense. When you sit you are stopping to take a little time to meditate, but don't forget the other postures—lying, standing, and walking—which are just as useful and might be more propitious for you.

You can also choose to practice different methods at different times. That's for you to see. You might also want to bring general awareness as a kind of informal practice into daily life. You can also try to find a sitting group, or a teacher, or listen to audio.

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One thing I would always recommend is at lunchtime to find a little break and, for at least five minutes, take a little meditative pause. I think that can be so useful. Also, if you want to meditate in the long term, remember that at times you won't be able to do it because you're tired or because of different conditions, but you can always try again and you can always bring a friendly awareness. The friendly awareness is what is really important, so please have a good practice.

Congratulations on doing this whole month of practice. It was great being with you.