



Lake Meditation

Webinar Handout

Overview

This meditation introduced a lake meditation. Some people find the image of a lake particularly helpful. Water has the captivating quality of receptivity. It parts to allow anything in, and then resumes being itself. Some of the key characteristics behind water's power reveal themselves in its receptive, supple, and transformative qualities. Follow the script below to practice the lake meditation on your own. Allow 15-20 minutes for the meditation.

Lake Meditation Script by Jon Kabat Zinn

Begin by getting into a comfortable position. Focus your attention on your breath.

Now picture in your mind's eye a lake — a body of water held in a receptive basin by the earth itself.

Note in the mind's eye and in your own heart that water likes to pool in low places. It seeks its own level, asks to be contained. The lake you invoke may be deep or shallow, blue or green, muddy or clear. With no wind, the surface of the lake is flat. Mirror-like, the lake's surface reflects trees, rocks, sky, and clouds — holding everything in itself, if only momentarily. Wind stirs up waves on the lake — from ripples to heavy chop. Clear reflections disappear. But sunlight may still sparkle in the ripples and dance on the waves in a play of shimmering diamonds. When night comes, it is the moon's turn to dance on the lake, or if the surface is still, to be reflected in it — along with the outline of trees and shadows. In winter, the lake may freeze over; yet teem with movement and life below.

When you have established a picture of the lake in your mind's eye, allow yourself to become one with the lake as you sit in meditation, so that your energies are held by your awareness and by your openness and compassion for yourself in the same way as the lake's waters are held by the receptive and accepting basin of the earth.

Breathing with the lake image moment by moment, feeling its body as your body, allow your mind and your heart to be open and receptive, to reflect whatever comes near. Experience the moments of complete stillness when both reflection and water are completely clear, and other moments when the surface may be disturbed, choppy, or stirred up — reflections and depth lost for a time.

Through it all, as you dwell in meditation, simply note the play of the various energies of your own mind and heart, the fleeting thoughts and feelings, impulses and reactions which come and go as ripples and waves, noting their effects just as you observe the various changing energies at play on the lake: the wind, the waves, the light and shadow and reflections, the colors, and the smells.

Do you feel like your thoughts and emotions disturb the surface? Can you see a rippled or wavy surface as an intimate, essential aspect of being a lake, of having a surface? Can you identify not only with the surface but with the entire body of the water, so that you become the stillness below

the surface as well, which at most experiences only gentle undulations, even when the surface is disturbed?

In the same way, in your meditation practice and in your daily life, can you identify not only with the content of your thoughts and feelings but also with the vast unwavering reservoir of awareness residing below the surface of the mind? In the lake meditation, we sit with the intention to hold in awareness and acceptance all the qualities of mind and body, just as the lake sits held, cradled, contained by the earth, reflecting sun, moon, stars, trees, rocks, clouds, sky, birds, and light, — caressed by the air and wind, which bring out and highlight its essence, its vitality, its sparkle.

Continue breathing and meditating in silence now.

When you are ready you may slowly and gently open your eyes.

This meditation script was adapted from *Wherever You Go There You Are: Mindfulness Meditation in Everyday Life* by Jon Kabat-Zinn (1994).

Resources

Kabat-Zinn, Jon. *Wherever You Go There You Are: Mindfulness Meditation in Everyday Life*. NewYork: Hyperion Books, 1994.