**Dr. Jeff Brantley:** Hello, I'm Jeff Brantley. I'm here to offer some support and guidance in mindfulness practice. We'll have about a 20-minute session here, or thereabouts, with a chance to explore a bit of a longer practice with the mindful breathing, which is a very powerful mindfulness practice to help us establish ourselves in each moment, establish ourselves in periods of silent meditation or prolonged meditation periods, but also in the midst of, really, everyday life—including challenging moments of everyday life.

If we breathe mindfully even for a few breaths in those moments, it can be of great benefit to us, to help us see more clearly what's happening, to connect more deeply with our own reactions, to see more clearly the choices we have before us, and to make the most effective and healthy choices we can. The mindful breathing can support all of that because, again, it's the awareness that knows what's here now.

Once we trust that in ourselves and recognize it, we can begin to really have a different relationship with what life offers us and a different connection, which can be quite a bit more rewarding, at least in my experience. We'll do some mindful breathing a little bit longer, with a little less of me talking, for you to really have a chance to explore it. Then, the latter few minutes of this period, I want to offer an option. You don't have to do it, but an option to practice the place of good-heartedness in ourselves, our great friendliness, our boundless good heart with a practice that's deeply intertwined, inseparable in some ways from mindfulness itself. It's the practice of kindness and compassion, loving-kindness, some people call it.

We can do that in many ways, but it really is a practice related to friendliness, the basic feeling of friendliness we have for others. That feeling you offer your friend, “a happy birthday,” or where you see your friend or your loved one is in distress and you say, "Gosh, I'm sorry. I hope you feel better. I hope things go better for you." That place in ourselves, that good heart that generates this feeling of friendliness and compassion is a place we can—it's important to—recognize and remember because so often we get caught up in a reaction that's not so good-hearted, maybe it's irritation or fear or anxiety.

When we notice that, when we mindfully notice a reaction like that in ourselves, if we can pivot, pivot in that moment to wishing ourselves well, ourselves safety and ease, it can give us a ground to stand on in the present moment to make a much more compassionate and wise decision or action. In the latter part of this guided meditation I'll offer the option, if you'd like to try it, of some of these phrases and there's a lot out there about loving-kindness meditation and compassion meditations.

Again, remembering you've got all of the mindfulness you need and all of the good-heartedness, too. We're really just learning to bring attention there and to recognize what we already have and begin to develop a faith and trust that we can turn to those parts of ourselves when we really need them. Letting yourself find a comfortable position and remembering you can have your eyes open or closed…if your eyes are open, to let that gaze lightly rest at a spot on the desk in front of you, or the wall or the floor, and your eyes, of course, could be closed.

If you haven't already, then letting yourself drop into awareness. That could be as natural as simply noticing the experience in this moment of your body sitting, if you're sitting, bringing your attention to the heaviness of the body or the sensation of air against your skin, or anything else, just noticing how it is in this moment. If it helps— sometimes it helps, really, especially if the mind is dull or if it's very active—to narrow the focus of your attention, so bringing the attention now to the place in your body where the breath’s sensation is most easy for you to feel. It's not about right or wrong.

It's just finding that place where you can feel this breath sensation most easily. It might be the tip of your nose or your mouth if you breathe with your mouth open—feeling the air coming into your body there and going out again on the out-breath.

It could be the sensation of your chest expanding and contracting with each breath. Feeling maybe the front of your chest, or the sides, or even the back sensations, anywhere in your chest as the in-breath comes into your body…little pause and then the out-breath sensation arises and you feel your chest contracting.

It might be the sensations of your belly rising and falling with each breath. You could place your attention there if it's easier, just feeling the belly, the abdomen rise, little pause, it stops, and then it falls. It might change with different times that you practice mindful breathing, but for right now, just letting your attention lightly rest at the place you feel this breath sensation most easily, letting the breath come to you…letting the meditation support you, trusting your body to breathe naturally, perhaps noticing some breaths are short, some are long, some are deep, some are shallow.

Some may be rough and others smooth. It's all okay. The practice is letting the breath come to you, in whatever condition the breath is, this breath, letting it be the way it is, letting it go, and knowing something about how this breath is while it's here, and knowing when it's gone.

If you notice your mind has wandered, that's okay. You didn't make a mistake. The mind will wander. Other things call the attention. When you notice your attention is somewhere else, you could smile. Noticing where it is, maybe it's thoughts, maybe it's sounds, other sensations, just noticing is enough, and very gently then, even tenderly, bringing your attention back to this breath and this moment.

You might have to bring your attention back many, many times. It's all okay. It's a kind of training we're doing, of our attention, exploring the vast landscape of awareness—coming back here and now, this breath.

Dropping any sense of struggle or strain, just letting whatever sensations, thoughts, or sounds come in, letting them come, noticing, letting them go, and then when it helps, gently coming back to this breath…this breath, letting the breath come to you, letting the meditation support you.

Now feeling free to continue practicing with the breath awareness, or however you wish for the last few minutes of this session, but I will—if you'd like to experiment with some loving-kindness phrases, the great good-heartedness—I'll offer some phrases and suggestions and, again, this practice is about remembering, reconnecting with the part we already have—our friendliness, our good heart.

The phrases are many ways to practice. These phrases are one of the ways that are very helpful for most people, and you could use different words and phrases depending on what resonates most truthfully and deeply for you. I'll offer a few different ones and you can try them out, try them on, and use others if you like. We also like to practice the loving-kindness with different categories with ourself and our friends and loved ones, difficult people, people we don't know, neutral people, all people, all living things—whatever makes sense, you can work with different categories—is a very illuminating practice.

In the time we have here, I'm going to focus just on a couple of categories, ourselves and a loved one, or a good friend, and you can experiment with the other categories as you wish. Again, if you haven't already, letting yourself rest in awareness, perhaps noticing, gathering attention in the body and the experience of the body in this moment, shifting, if you need to, finding a comfortable position.

If it helps, your eyes could be closed or you could have them open. If they're open, let the gaze lightly rest on a spot not looking around, and your attention on your breathing for a few breaths, if you like, some mindful breaths, just collecting, gathering attention, here and now.

Then, if you like and when you're ready, letting yourself remember the feeling of someone's kindness, the kindness in your own heart, the feeling you get when a loved one or a friend sees you and smiles, the feeling you get when a small child takes your hand, or the feeling you get when your pet greets you—wag of the tail or a purr, maybe a chirp—this feeling of being seen and welcomed and cared for, that's in all of us, really.

If you don't feel anything, that's okay, too—just noticing what you do feel and letting it be all right, letting it be there. It could be the feeling you have in nature, a beautiful sunset, or by the ocean or a mountain lake, or a sunrise someplace, or just in your own yard or your own local garden, your neighborhood, where you see a flower or you see the beauty of the winter trees or the spring trees, wherever you are. The sense of being in nature and the beauty of belonging there, letting that feeling as much as possible support you.

Then bringing to mind, bringing into your attention, a loved one or a friend who you'd like to send good wishes to. They don't have to be sick or hurt, but they could be, but anyone you'd like to send good wishes to, and imagine speaking directly to this person and using a phrase, something like "In this moment or in your situation, may you be safe and well. In this moment, may you be safe and well." And if you like, you could call your friend’s name, your loved one's name, “in this moment, may you be safe and well."

The same spirit if you put your arm around their shoulder and said that to them—it's the spirit of great good-heartedness. You don't have to overthink it, or figure out how to make it happen. It's the well-wishing, it's the practice, the great friendliness, in this moment, may you be safe and well.

In this moment, may you be peaceful. “May you be peaceful in this moment." It's like a little lullaby you sing quietly in your own heart to yourself. In this moment may you live with ease and with kindness; in this moment, may you live with ease and with kindness…noticing whatever is happening in the present in your own heart, mind, and body and letting it be okay, letting it be the way it is, letting it be.

Now if you like, bringing your attention to yourself and letting go of that loved one or that friend. Bringing the attention just to yourself, or even to some part of yourself that you wish to send a kindness and good wishes, healing to, really, compassion—with similar or the same phrases, whatever resonates for you, something like "in this moment, may I be safe and well."

With the same spirit of good-heartedness you wished your loved one: "In this moment, may I be safe and well. In this moment, may I be peaceful. In this moment, may I be peaceful. In this moment, may I live with ease, with ease, and with kindness."

Sometimes people get caught up in angry feelings or feeling they're not worthy of wishing themselves well, and let that go. Everyone's worthy. You just wish yourself well, the way you'd wish a perfect stranger, even a difficult person, safety and ease. You certainly are deserving. You're worthy. "In this moment, may I be safe and well. May I be peaceful. May I live with ease and with kindness.”

It's like a little lullaby you sing to yourself in your own heart. It could be one word, "may I be," or a phrase or different phrases, safe and well, peaceful, live with ease and with kindness.

When you're ready, ending your meditation and bringing attention back to our session. Thank you. Now you can engage those practices of mindful presence, mindful breathing, or body awareness, kindness, the good-heartedness, in any moment or any situation. The more you practice, the more you can discover about the power you have within, to meet any situation mindfully and with a great, good heart. Thank you, and I hope safe, good wishes to each and every one. Thank you.