**Centering meditation**

One of the most powerful things you can experience during meditation is a deeper sense of connection with yourself, and to the world around you. There are many different potential explanations for what this is. Some of these explanations might conflict with, or compliment, your view of the world, particularly if you consider yourself to be a spiritual or religious individual.

I do not know where these feelings come from when I experience them. I do not know what they mean, or how to explain them appropriately using only words. What I do know though, is that they evoke a deep sense of joy and bliss, a heightened state of emotion, and a sense of peace and unity with all that is around. And that is enough for me to know that they are important. I believe that everyone will understand and interpret this part of meditation based on their own experiences, and I do not want to put myself in a position where I am saying what is right or wrong in this situation. It is like trying to explain an ethereal or supernatural experience to someone, and difficult to convey the reality of it unless others have experienced it themselves too.

Whatever you allow yourself to recognise these experiences as, they can still be generally described as achieving a greater sense of connection with what is often called your inner or higher self. The self is considered to be the part of you, the part of all of us, that resides internally when we disconnect from the individualistic ego. It might help to think of this as a sort of state of inner silence and total peace. Your body and your mind are great machines, and it takes a special type of awareness to quieten them and listen to what they are hiding. Practicing meditation can teach you how to listen properly to what is inside of you.

This following meditation is adapted from Dr. Joan Borysenko, and her book, Fire in the Soul, which was first published in 1993.

For this exercise, we are going to try a very simple method called centering. Centering is placing your awareness on a particular memory or experience. A time when you felt that beautiful, peaceful, loving connection while in a state of consciousness. We all have libraries of special memories locked away inside of us, and these can be activated to help recreate those moments. These can be memories of a loved one, an experience in nature, or anything where you have felt that real and special sense of connection with life, with something perhaps a little different than you experience every day.

For now though, let us begin. Hopefully, you are sitting somewhere calm, peaceful, and comfortable. Your own meditation spot. Start by taking a biiiiig stretch, working any tension out of the different parts of your body. Gently, close your eyes, and begin by taking a few of deep breaths. With each exhale, letting go a little bit more, like a big sigh of relief as you settle into yourself.

Let your breath return to its natural rhythm. Let it flow in and out of you, without forcing. Natural and gentle. Notice what it feels like to breathe. How your body rises up gently with each in breath, and settles back down as you breathe out. Notice where you feel the motion of breathing most. Your mouth, your throat, perhaps lower down in your belly region.

Enjoy the sensation of breath moving in and out in the natural rhythm of your body. Feeling and observing the flow of each one. Feeling how each outbreath is an opportunity for letting go, of all that is inside of you, returning gradually to the deepest part of your being. To the storehouse of your own special memories. Memories, moments in time, where you felt truly alive and at peace with the world.

Remember now one of these moments. Allow it to rise up inside of you. A time when you felt truly connected to life. Watching a sunset. Creating something wonderful and beautiful. Deeply in touch with another person. A friend, a family, a loved one. Maybe even a pet. A moment, where you felt present in life.

If more than one memory comes to mind, choose one which feels right for now. Relive it in is much detail as you like, as feels right. What do you see around you? Look around, what is above you? What is below you? What shapes are they? What colours are they?

Do you hear any sounds? What are they from? What about any fragrances? Can you taste anything?

What are the textures of the things around you? How do they feel? Can you touch them? Are you being touched by anything?

Do you feel a breeze? Do you feel the sun? Is it warm, or cold? Can you feel the earth beneath your feet?

How does the memory feel within you, within your mind, within your body?

Let the memory gently fade. Become aware of the peaceful feelings that remain.

Whenever you feel ready, bring attention back to your body. Where you felt the feelings the most. Returning slowly to that physical sense of presence. Still at peace. And whenever you feel ready, opening your eyes. And slowly entering back into the senses, becoming more aware of the world around you. And aware of your presence within it.