

Meditation: Realizing Your Aspiration

Beyond any meditation technique, what energizes and guides our spiritual life is aspiration. This reflection can help deepen your connection with your aspiration and bring it alive in your life. ~ Tara Brach

This meditation is on realizing and connecting with our deep aspiration.

Beyond any meditative technique it's remembering what most matters to us that awakens and frees our spirit. As master Suzuki Roshi taught: *The most important thing is remembering the most important thing.*

For most of us, realizing and connecting with deep aspiration takes time and attention. It's like peeling back the layers of an onion. We may unfold layers of more immediate wants and fears before we arrive at the source - the light of pure aspiration.

As we inhabit this aspiration, it becomes the compass of the heart that guides us home.

Find a comfortable way of sitting and allow yourself to relax and be at ease.

With a receptive presence, become aware of the state of your heart. Just notice... is there a sense of openness or tightness? Of peace or anxiety? Of contentment or dissatisfaction?

Begin to notice the wants that are here in your life. Perhaps you're wishing your partner would treat you differently? Or you're wanting to get past a particularly demanding stretch at work? You might long to be free of chronic pain. Maybe you're wanting one of your children to feel more secure and confident.

Whatever arises, allow it to be there and with interest, ask yourself: *If I got what I wanted, what would that really give me?*

Perhaps you imagine if you are treated differently, you'd be less reactive and free to be more loving? Or if you were relieved of chronic pain, you'd then be able to relax and enjoy your life more fully.

Continuing your inquiry you might now ask directly: *What does my heart really long for?* It can also be helpful to ask: *What most matters in this life?* Or: *If I was at the end of my life looking back, what would be most important about how I live today - this moment?*

And as you pose these questions, sense that you're addressing your inquiry directly to your heart.

After asking, simply listen and be aware of any words, images, or feelings that arise. Try to be patient. It can take some time for the mind to open out of its habitual ideas about life and connect with what is most alive and true.

You may need to repeat several times some version of *what does my heart really long for?* And then listen in receptive silence to what arises.

And as you listen, stay in touch with the feelings in your body and particularly in your heart.

Your aspiration will probably express itself differently at different times. You might feel a longing to love fully or feel loved, to know truth, to be peaceful, to be helpful, to be free of fear and suffering.

There's no right aspiration.

Sometimes you'll land on an immediate intention that supports your aspiration. For example, you might become aware of the yearning to write poetry or paint. This would be in the service of the deep aspiration to live a creative vital life. What's important is attuning to what is most true for you in this moment: *What does my heart long for?*

The signs of arriving at a clear intention or deep aspiration are a felt sense of sincerity, innocence, energy, or flow. Some people describe an inner shift that gives them fresh resolution, openness and ease.

If there's no real sense of connecting with what matters, that's fine. You might sit quietly and open to whatever naturally arises or choose to continue this exploration at another time.

And if you sense you've arrived at what feels like a very pure and deep aspiration, allow yourself to inhabit the fullness of your longing.

Feel the very essence of your longing in a cellular way as it expresses through your whole body and being.

Let your aspiration be the prayer of your awakening heart.

Friends, you can practice reflecting on your aspiration at the beginning of the day, or at the end of the day, at the beginning or end of a meditation sitting. In addition, as you move through the day, try to pause periodically and inquire as to what most matters to you.

In any moment that you remember what you care about, you have opened your heart to the blessings of true refuge - of homecoming.