

Audio Track 19: Soften, Soothe, and Allow

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Try this: Soften, soothe, and allow.

Begin by calling to mind a situation that's causing you some distress. This could be a relational problem, especially with your partner, or it could be any situation. All kinds of practice are good here. Again, you'll want to stick to something you can feel in your body, but not something that's overwhelming. Maybe a 3 to 4 on a distress scale of 1 to 10 where 10 is the most stressful.

As you open to this situation, notice how you feel physically, mentally, and emotionally. No need to change things or make them go away. Just meet yourself with curiosity. What's happening in your body? What thoughts are you having? And which emotions are present? Now opening to the body sensations, see where you feel the distress most easily in your body. Perhaps there's an achiness in the chest, tightness in the throat, or a knot in the belly. See where it is for you. If you can, meet that place with some physical compassion, perhaps by offering a kind touch, placing your hand on that part of the body, letting the hand fill with kindness, and letting kindness seep from the hand into the body.

If you find that the body is holding the tension in an effort to be strong without much softness, balancing that strength with a sense of softness now. Inviting a sense of softness and ease into that part of the body. No need to force this softening, just allowing the body to soften, perhaps softening around the area of tension or other physical sensation. You might even find it helpful

to gently whisper to yourself: softening, softening, softening. You can stay here as long as you like.

And when you're ready, begin by offering some mental compassion. If you find you've been resisting the situation, perhaps with thoughts of "it's not right," or "it shouldn't be like this," see if you can drop the fight with things as they are, offering yourself some ease by allowing things to be as they are. Remember, we aren't saying we're okay with the situation or we don't need to do things differently in the future. We're simply acknowledging that in this moment this is how things are and allowing our minds to rest a bit. If it feels right, perhaps gently whispering to yourself: allowing, allowing, allowing. As you open to the reality of the situation. You can stay here as long as you like.

And when you feel ready, we can try offering some emotional compassion. Given whatever emotions are present for you, what do you need to hear? Words of comfort, validation and reassurance? "You did the best you could," or "I'm here for you." Or, "Of course, you're upset after what you've been through." Or maybe you need to be reminded of your strong back. Perhaps the words you need to hear are more like, "You're okay," "You can do this," or "You'll get there." Please take some time to offer yourself what you need to hear right now.

If you're having trouble finding kind words, you might consider what you would say to a dear friend in this same situation. Can you offer yourself a similar message? Or perhaps there's someone in your life who always offers you kindness. What would they say to you right now? Can you let their words in or say them to yourself? If not, just having the intention to be kind and

understanding is enough. If you did find words, see if you can soften and allow the kind words in. Allow yourself to be soothed. Perhaps saying to yourself: soothing, soothing, soothing. You can stay here as long as you like.

And when you're ready, take a moment and notice how you feel after tending to yourself in this way. As best you can, accepting yourself and your practice just like this. Even if only for right now. And remembering to thank yourself, for showing up, for caring. For giving yourself what you need.

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