



Creating Shared Intent for Perilous Times

Useful for any highly charged situation, designed for demonstrations.

from *Meditations on Everything Under the Sun*
The Dance of Imagination, Intuition and Mindfulness

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“When a boat is in dangerous waters, one centered person with strong intention can prevent it from capsizing.”
— Thich Nhat Hanh

This meditation prepares people to be able to remain centered and unified in the midst of chaotic and potentially violent circumstances. It was written in collaboration with Ruby Phillips to help Seattle demonstrators protest the meeting of the World Trade Organization in 1999. Drawing on people’s own sense of the sacred, the meditation weaves their spirits into a web of power so they can hold strong and offer a powerful presence, increasing both their effectiveness and safety. By using symbols, it empowers people to re-access their meditation experience in the midst of stressful circumstances. If people practice this meditation as a group a few times and participants also occasionally take a moment to focus on their symbols, it increases the likelihood that they will spontaneously call upon their symbols when confronted with danger.

This meditation is also very useful for opening a meeting or a controversial discussion because it amplifies group cohesion. The first and last few paragraphs make a shortened version that can be completed in less than five minutes — or in less than one minute once people have created symbols. See the end for points you can use to introduce it to your organization or group.

Bring your awareness into your body. Notice your body breathing.... Feel breath rolling through your body.... Feel the rise and fall of your breath.... Relaxed and full....

Breath carries life. All that is alive breathes. Appreciate the simple miracle of breath.... Breath renews life.... As you breathe, feel your breath renew you now.... Every cell of your body bathed by breath.

Feel your feet.... Feel the Earth.... Feel yourself supported by the Earth. Feel the stability of the Earth... (*Optional: grow roots down into the ground; draw strength from the Earth.*)

What you breathe out, the plants breathe in.... Breath weaves life together. Breath carries life.... Imagine as though the Earth itself is breathing with you.... As though the Earth and sky breathe, as though All That Is is alive....

Remember the sacred.....

Life is sacred.... Remember the beauty and uniqueness of human beings living in different places on the Earth.... All people on the Earth are sacred..... Remember the life of the



forests.... Remember the life of the seas..... Feel the power of the forests...the animals...the seas...and deep in the Earth.....life everywhere.....

Now notice that all of us here are breathing.... Remember that we are all here to take a stand for life, for all living beings on the Earth. We are here together; together we are powerful.... Breathe the power of life.... Imagine that our breathing finds harmonic rhythms.... Notice how the quality of energy here is changing as we focus on our common purpose.... Bathe in this energy....

Breathing our unity, breathing our common purpose...breathing the power of our shared intention...breathing with the Earth, breathing with each other, breathing the sacred.....

Now create a symbol or a gesture that represents this energy — whatever feels right to you. (Or bring to mind your symbol/gesture, if you already have one.)..... Know that when you call it to mind, you evoke our shared intent. Know that every time you evoke it, its power increases. Tell yourself this now....

As you breathe out, send this power to where it is needed...to work well with one another, to stand with all life.... Imagine bathing the situation with this energy.....

Tell yourself you'll remember to call upon this energy. Tell yourself this now.... *Expect* it to be true. Envision our success of our shared intent..... Expect it to be true.....

(Optional) Imagine a chaotic situation..... Project yourself into it.... Call up your symbol. Evoke our shared intention.... Feel your feet; feel the Earth.... Breathe.... Breath creates space.... Draw upon the energy around you and imagine channeling it into our shared intention.... Feel everyone stand their ground.... You might want to imagine roots stretching deep into the Earth, breathing with the Earth, drawing strength from the Earth... weathering the storm.

(Optional) Take some time to focus on the issues that we will be addressing in this meeting, and imagine that we remain focused and come up with our best collaborative thinking. *(Slowly name the issues here.)*

Begin to move your attention to an outer focus.... Bring the power of this shared intention with you..... Slowly, coming back to an outer focus of attention...

When you are ready, open your eyes....



SOME INTRODUCTORY POINTS (in addition to the ones on the overview page)

- This creates a way for people to easily tap their own internal resources and feel collective purpose in the midst of chaos--to be able to stand firm, as trees in the storm.
- Breathing provides room for mindful choice. We can respond rather than react.
- Whatever is in our imagination at any given moment, our bodies and the whole of our being is responding to. Call it suggestion if you like--e.g., if you have a fear of heights, you don't need to stand on a ledge in order to get your adrenaline pumping; all you have to do is imagine yourself there.
- Listen to this meditation with your heart, with soft awareness, rather than with your intellect. The words are creating an atmosphere for your experience, so there is no need to listen to every word. Meditation speaks to the right side of the brain, not the rational mind.
- This exercise is laying the pathways in awareness so that it can be easily accessible when needed later. If you don't have a word in your vocabulary, you can't use it. That is why symbols work so well.
- Gesture/Symbol--It can be an image, a gesture, or both—whatever works for you.. It must be specific and easily recallable—e.g., thumb and ring finger to depict love and choice. Because the meditative state of consciousness is suggestible, you are establishing your own associative pattern in advance. It is best to practice imagining using it a few times after the initial practice. This can take no more than a minute, and it assures that you will in fact bring it to awareness when you need it.
- This works with breath and energy.... Draw upon your own sense of the sacred (God, Goddess, The Great Spirit, the Spirit of Humanity etc.)
- Practice evoking the energy again on your own. If you do it alone, it won't feel as dramatic, but it reinforces the process. It is helpful to take a few minutes in meetings to return to this feeling of Energetic Shared Intent.