

## **Guided Meditation on the Ecological Self**

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(Ancestral Homelands of the Menominee and Ho-Chunk Nations)

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Introductory Notes:

*This meditation is inspired by the concept of the ecological self as described by Arne Naess, Joanna Macy, John Seed, and other participants in the Deep Ecology movement, which began in the early 1970s, and also by a guided meditation by Sharon Salzberg on gratitude and our interconnectedness with other people.*

*The ecological self honored here is the expansive, interconnected self, that lives in relationship with everything else that exists.*

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*A recording of this meditation is available at:*

<https://davidjvoelker.com/uncategorized/guided-meditation-on-the-ecological-self/>

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### **Meditation Script**

I have just a couple of suggestions before we start.

While I recommend sitting for this meditation, if you are able, you can also do the meditation while lying down, or even while standing.

If you find that focusing on your breath causes anxiety or other discomfort, instead you can focus on the feeling of your body being pulled downward by gravity toward the Earth, and pressing into the chair or ground, or wherever you are sitting or lying.

If you can do so comfortably, slide forward a bit on your chair so that you can keep your upper body upright and supported using your skeleton, rather than leaning back into the chair.

You can either close your eyes, or you can focus your gaze on the ground, about 3-4 feet in front of you.

Let's begin.

[opening chime]

As we begin, take three, deep grounding breaths - inhale slowly, and fully, and exhale slowly and completely.

Now, just breathing naturally and normally, focus your attention on *what it feels like* to breathe. We'll sit quietly for a moment—just breathing.

[Take 2-3 silent breaths.]

As you inhale, feel the air in your nostrils, your chest, and your belly. Notice where your breath feels most alive.

The oxygen being absorbed in your lungs came from the trees, the grasses, the phytoplankton in the oceans, and *all of the green plant beings*. You thrive on oxygen that was exhaled by plants—by countless plant beings.

When you exhale, the carbon dioxide formed inside your body may well be inhaled by plant beings.

We living beings breathe in and out together.

If it feels good to you, on your next out breath, exhale gratitude for this life-giving air.

[Take 2-3 silent breaths.]

Notice the weight of your body pressing into the chair or ground. Well over half of your weight comes from the water in your body. Imagine where that water came from. See in your mind's eye how the water gathered in the clouds, fell from the sky as rain, flowed across the earth into a stream or river or lake--or perhaps it seeped down into the earth and joined the groundwater. Remember what it feels like to be thirsty and to drink a glass of cool water.

If it feels good to you, on your next out breath, exhale gratitude for the clouds, the rain, the stream, the river, and the lake inside of you. This is the same water that has supported life on Earth for millions upon millions of years.

[Take 2-3 silent breaths.]

The food that you eat gives you energy and all of the nutrients your body needs to live. What have you had to eat today and where that did that food come from: from the sun, the soil, the water, the air, the mycorrhizal fungi, the plant beings, and perhaps also animal beings. The energy stored by plants and animals when they were living now allows *you* to live.

On your next exhale, see if you can feel the warmth of your body in your belly. The heat inside your body can be traced back through the web of life, to the sun.

[Take 2-3 silent breaths.]

Once again, notice the weight of your body pressing into the chair or ground. Feel how the bones in your skeleton allow you to hold yourself upright or hold you to the ground. Feel how the gravity of the Earth pulls you into your chair, pulls you toward the ground. The minerals in your bones come from the very earth that pulls on you, from the very Earth, that holds you close.

And before they were part of the Earth, these minerals were born in the stars.

[Take 2-3 silent breaths.]

Can you feel the clouds and rivers in your veins, the breath of the plants in your lungs, the energy of the sun in your belly, and the minerals of the earth in your bones? Can you feel how your life is connected to all other life on this planet?

[Take 2-3 silent breaths.]

If it feels good to you, on your next out breath, exhale gratitude for the winds and waters, the plant and animal beings, and the living planet of which you are a small part.

How will *you* reciprocate these gifts?

[Take 3 silent breaths.]

What might you do, to help ensure that all living beings can enjoy clean air, clean water, and healthy soil?

[Take 3 silent breaths.]

[closing chime]



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