

A Meditation on Letting Go

If you let go a little

you will have a little happiness.

If you let go a lot

you will have a lot of happiness.

If you let go completely

you will be free.

One of the essential tasks for living a wise life is letting go. Letting go is the path to freedom. It is only by letting go of the hopes, the fears, the pain, the past, the stories that have a hold on us that we can quiet our mind and open our heart.

We do not need to fear letting go. We can trust the courage and vulnerability of our heart to meet life as it is; we can rest kindly where we are. As we let go, the tender ground of honesty, healing, and love will carry us through the ever-changing world.

Remember, letting go does not mean losing the knowledge we have gained from the past. The knowledge of the past stays with us. To let go is to release the images and emotions, the grudges and fears, the clingings and disappointments of the past that bind our spirit. Like emptying a cup, letting go leaves us free to receive, refreshed, sensitive, and awake.

Letting go is not the same as aversion, struggling to get rid of something. We cannot genuinely let go of what we resist. What we resist and fear secretly follows us even as we push it away. To let go of fear or trauma, we need to acknowledge just how it is. We need to feel it fully and accept that it is so. It is as it is. Letting go begins with letting be.

When we learn to let things be, they gradually lose their power; they cease to disturb us.

As we allow what is true, space comes into the body and mind; we breathe and soften and come to rest. In accepting it, we become free. Then we can ask: "Do I have to continue to replay this story? Do I have to hold on to these losses, these feelings? Is it time to let this go?" The heart will know.

There is an organic cycle to letting go. We will feel it as a wisdom that knows it is time to move on, to release the past and tenderly return to the present. When we let go we return to an honest and simple openness.

Let yourself sit comfortably and quietly. Bring a kindly attention to your body and breath. Relax. Let yourself be settled in the ground of the present.

Now bring into awareness the story, the situation, the feelings, the reactions that it is time to let go of. Name them gently (betrayal, sadness, anxiety, etc.) and allow them the space to be, to float without resistance, held in a heart of compassion. Continue to breathe. Ask yourself if it is indeed wise

to release this past. Feel the benefit, the ease that will come from this letting go. Say to yourself, *Let go, Let go*, gently over and over.

Soften the body and heart and let any feelings that arise drain out of you into the earth. Sense how the feelings can be released like water draining out of a tub. Feel the space that comes as you let go, how the heart softens and the body opens.

Now direct the mind to envision the future where this situation has been released. Sense the freedom, the innocence, the ease that this letting go can bring. Say to yourself, *Let go*, several more times. Sit quietly and notice if the feelings return. Each time they return, breathe softly as if to bow to them, and say kindly, *I've let you go*.

The images and feelings may come back many times, yet as you continue to practice, they will eventually fade. Gradually the mind will come to trust the space of letting go. Gradually the heart will be easy and you will be free.

-From *The Art of Forgiveness, Lovingkindness, and Peace*, Jack Korkfield