

**Linda Clair**  
**Four-and-a-half-day Meditation Retreat**  
**Cold Ash Retreat Centre, Newbury, UK**  
**13 – 17 November 2019**  
**Transcription from Audio Recordings**

**File 1a – Wednesday afternoon guided meditation**

Linda: So close your eyes and take a few deep breaths into the belly and feel your body. You're here right now. You don't need to think about what might happen in the next four and a half days. You don't need to be thinking about what happened on the way here. You're finally here. So often the first day of a retreat is a settling-in period, the first twenty-four hours. And you might suddenly go, "What am I doing here?" But just be patient, particularly the first twenty-four hours just use as a settling-in period. It's quite normal to have a lot of resistance, particularly on the first day, but persevere. The main thing is that you keep doing this.

And of course your mind will want you to do anything but this. It will try and destabilise you every step of the way. But what this practice does is strengthen you, it stabilises you, it provides this essential foundation. It's not the foundation of the past, of your mind, your intellect, it's the foundation of your body. You use your body as your foundation. So your reference point gradually changes from your past, from thinking, to your body. And that's what this practice is all about, being in your body. So lots of things will happen in your body in the next few days.

You don't need to be scared, although there probably will be some anxiety. The fear at times can feel very real. You can actually feel it in your body. And this is all about facing your fear. You're not necessarily going to feel relaxed. You're not necessarily going to feel anything. So try not to expect anything. There is no way that you *should* be feeling; there is nothing that *should* be happening.

So take your attention to the top of your head and feel the sensation on the top of your head however it feels right now. It doesn't matter how it feels; there's no perfect sensation. There's no perfect anything. There's just now.

Feel the sensation of your eyelids on your eyes and keep breathing deeply into the belly using your breath as an anchor in your body. Feel your breath going through your nostrils, your mouth, your lips. Feel your jaw and your chin, your tongue touching your palate. Try not to visualise; really feel the sensation in your body.

Feel your shoulders. So even if you feel tension in any part of your body, rather than habitually trying to relieve that tension by movement, stay still and watch your reaction to it. Watch the intensity change, fluctuate. And keep breathing into the belly. Go to your left shoulder and go down your arm to your left elbow and feel your elbow. Then go down to your left hand and feel your hand. And feel your thumb and each finger. Feel your whole left arm.

Then take your attention to your right shoulder and feel your shoulder, however it feels – there's no good or bad. Go down your arm to your right elbow. Then go down to your right hand and feel your

hand. And feel your thumb and each finger. Feel your whole right arm. Feel both arms and both hands.

Then take your attention to your chest. And as you breathe in and out, and it's good to breathe in and out through the nose, feel the gentle movement of your chest with the breath.

Then go down to the abdomen. This is the place that many avoid. And sometimes you have to persist to keep bringing your attention down here because this is where you feel disturbance, anxiety, fear. Sometimes you might feel sick with fear; this is where you feel it. So this is your home base; you keep bringing your attention back to rise and fall of the abdomen with the breath again and again and again.

There's a lot of fear associated with the breath. It's the final sensation to leave the body before death – death of the body.

Feel your thighs, your knees, your left foot and your right foot. Then feel your spine from the top of the spine, down your back, to the bottom of the spine. So every now and again you might need to gently straighten your spine. Then feel the whole body. This is where you are, in your body, right now.

And what is thinking. Can you be in your body and think about it? Thinking is an out of body experience. It's a movement away from where you are, right now. It's a movement away from your body, from now. So this practice is very simple, very direct. Not easy, and why should it be easy, why should anything be easy? It's challenging, deeply challenging, in a very exciting way. And the challenge never ends.

Each time you realise you've been lost in thinking, lost in your imagination and pretending that you're somewhere else, doing something else, being someone else, bring your attention back to the body, and primarily the breath in the abdomen, the rise and the fall of the abdomen with the breath. And it doesn't matter how many times you do this, but each time you come back to your body your mind becomes that bit weaker, and you become stronger.

So the next four days will be a challenge and it's up to you to rise to this challenge. Don't assume anything. Sometimes you'll love being here, you'll love doing this, and other times you'd rather be anywhere but here. But at the end of this retreat there will be a deep change. You might not see it at first but it's inevitable if you do this. And that's what you want and that's what you're most fearful of – change.