

A Three Movement Meditation on Sound (a guided mindfulness practice)

The movements can be performed in any order, and on their own, but there is a special internal reward that is felt by participating in all three movements in a row. One need not be a musician nor know anything about music to engage with the practice; one simply must be open.

Mvmt 1: *Environmental Soundscape: Near and Far*

Sit up straight with your feet flat on the floor.

Close your eyes or lower your gaze.

Listen to the sounds that fill the space around you.

Listen to the sounds in front of you.

Listen to the sounds behind you.

Can you listen to the sounds above you?

Can you listen to the sounds below you?

Listen for the most distant sound and focus on it.

(What are some of the qualities of the sound? Do you like the sound?)

Listen for the nearest sound and focus on it.

(What are some of the qualities of this sound? Do you like it?)

What is the relationship between the distant and the near sound?

Can you hear them together?

Are they musical to you?

(Or maybe they are just noise)

Pick any sound in the environment now that engages your attention and focus on it,

What do you like about it?

Is it musical to you?

If you can, expand your attention to the whole sonic landscape.

Try to attend to the near sounds, the far sounds, the sounds you like, the sounds you dislike.

The melodic sounds, the rhythmic sounds, the harmonic sounds, the discordant sounds, the sporadic sounds, the consistent sounds, the natural sounds, the manmade sounds, the calming sounds, the jarring sounds, the high sounds, the low sounds, the transient sounds, the unwavering sounds, the familiar sounds, the brand new sounds, the sounds you've never noticed, the sounds you always notice, the sounds that disrupt your focus, the sounds that enhance your focus, the sounds you wish you never heard, the sounds you love to hear, the sounds of my voice, the sounds contributed by your own mind...

And...

Do you hear the silences in between the sounds?

And,

If you turn your attention inward,

What sounds do you hear in there?

(And, how do they relate to the environmental sound palette of your external world? Take a few breaths and explore their relationship)

Gently bring your attention back into the room and open eyes.

Mvmt 2: *Deep Breaths and Sonic Flow*

Can be practiced with an instrument or with voice. Can be done in a group or alone.

Position yourself wherever is comfortable.

Sit / Stand up Straight.

Lower your gaze.

Take a deep breath.

Notice how your breath is sitting with you today.

Take another deep breath.

Listen to the sounds that fill the space around you.

(How do they make you feel?)

Listen in all directions.

Choose one sound that resonates and attend to it.

Why does this sound in particular resonate?

(Maybe you are struggling to find one. That is okay. Just continue to attend.)

Let the sound fill your mind. If you can't, find one that can.

If this is difficult, focus on the silences in between.

Take a deep breath.

You are going to prepare to respond sonically to your environmental sound.

Imagine your sonic response in your head first.

(It can be any sound you can possibly imagine and try to produce)

Imagine how your sonic emission will sound against the environmental sound.

Imagine the two sounds in harmony, gaining energy, sounding together.

When you are ready, try to make the sound on your instrument or voice.

How does the sound interact with the environment?

Does it sound like the version in your head? (It's okay if it doesn't)

Your sounds can be loud or soft, sharp or gentle,

Be mindful of how the sound emerges.

Continue making your sonic response,

And attend to how the resonance of your sound feels in your body.

How does it feel emotionally?

How does it feel physically?

Continue making your sound.

Take a deep breath.

You are going to prepare to link the sound to your breath.

On your inhale, anticipate the sound.

On your exhale, emit the sound.

Play with energizing your sound-making as you exhale your sound.

Take deep breaths and let the sound flow from you.

Let your body relax and begin to gently sway with the rhythm of your sound-making and your breath.

Continue making your sound and attend to its resonance with other sounds in the environmental palette.

Continue to let your sound flow with your exhales, and let your body sway in the rhythm.

Enjoy the sonic soundscape that you and your environment are creating.

Take a deep breath.

Release your last sonic exhale.

Gently bring your sound-making to a close.

Bring your attention back into the room.

Mvmt 3: *Comforting Thoughts and Gentle Tones*

Position yourself comfortably.

Close your eyes or lower your gaze.

Take a deep breath and focus your attention on the sounds that fill the space around you.

What sounds can you discern that are nearby?

Take a deep breath.

What sounds can you discern that are distant?

Can you attend to multiple sounds at once?

Consider the qualities of the sounds you hear.

Consider how these sounds are making you feel.

Are any sounds familiar?

Are any sounds unfamiliar?

Listen to the sounds in front of you, and behind you.

Listen for sounds above you, and below you.

Extend your ears in all directions.

Is there any sound that feels warm?

Listen for a moment and seek warmth in a sound.

(It's okay if you couldn't find warmth)

Take a deep breath and prepare to turn your attention inward and draw upon memory.

Call to mind a sound that makes you feel warm, and comforted.

Maybe sounds alone don't have comforting identities.

Think of any comforting memory, something that makes you feel good.

Maybe the memory involves a loved one, or a personal success, or a joyful day.

Try to envision the moments of the memory with clarity, and ask yourself what sounds you can remember.

Maybe the comforting voice of a loved one, or the weather on the day of the event.

Find warm sound within the memory and fill your mind with the warm sound.

Take a deep breath.

Now imagine yourself humming a gentle pitch in response to your warm memory.

Let your mind be inspired by warmth and comfort, and imagine a tone in your mind, that feels good to you.

Take the time to imagine a tone that makes you feel good.

Imagine the tone emanating from deep inside.

Take a deep breath and let the tone hum in your mind.

Take a deep inhale and, when you're ready, gently release your warm tone.

You don't have to sound loudly or clearly.

Just release the warmth of the sound into the space around you.

How does this feel in your body?

Take a deep breath and exhale your sound again.

Listen to the harmony you are creating with your environment.

Link your sound-making to your breath, and gently release your tone a few more times.

Release your sound one final time.

When you're ready, open your eyes and bring your attention back into the room.