

The mountain

Find a quiet, undisturbed place and perform the exercise while sitting.

Sit down comfortably. Now close your eyes and let the image of the most beautiful mountain you can imagine arise in your mind's eye. It can be a mountain that you already know or a mountain from your imagination. Now let this image become clearer and clearer.

Look closely at the shape of your mountain - its rock, its peak rising into the sky, and its foundation resting in the earth.

Consider its steep or gently sloping sides. Also notice how massive your mountain is - how solid - how motionless and how beautiful! Seen both from a distance and up close - a beauty that comes from its unique shape and form.

Perhaps the top is covered with snow; and its lower slopes are forested; perhaps it has a particularly lofty peak or even several peaks or a high plateau.

The mountain is deeply anchored in the earth, standing firm and secure. And even when clouds obscure it, when a storm rages around it, the mountain is always the mountain. Just sit here and breathe and become aware of the qualities of this mountain.

And you are the mountain.

You are the mountain with all its features and characteristics - with all its beauty! Sit like a mountain! Dignified and silent. Your head becomes the towering peak or the vast plateau, just as you imagined your mountain peak. Your shoulders and arms, your front are the slopes, your buttocks and legs form the solid base - rooted to the chair, cushion or ground.

Deep within your own body along the spine, experience the ascending quality of the mountain. And now, as you sit here, with each breath become a little more like this breathing mountain. Centered, present and unshakably resting in your stillness - completely what you are - beyond words and thoughts.

Become aware that the mountain is simply sitting there as the sun moves across the sky and light and shadow and color change from moment to moment. Day is followed by night and night is followed by day again! The mountain experiences constant change and yet always remains itself. It remains still while the seasons merge and the weather changes from day to day and from moment to moment.

See how the mountain embodies the stillness that outlasts all change. It just sits there and is itself.

Its magnificence and beauty are not dependent on whether or not it is seen or what the weather is like. The mountain doesn't care whether it is in the sunlight or enveloped in clouds - whether it is blazing hot or freezing cold. It just sits there and is itself.

Sometimes the fiercest storms and thunderstorms of unimaginable strength roar on it; and then spring comes - the birds sing again in the trees and flowers bloom in the mountain meadows, and huge amounts of meltwater shoot down into the valley in the mountain streams. While all of this is happening, the mountain just sits there, not really being impressed by what is happening on its surface.

Despite the constant changes in our own lives, we can embody the same unwavering stillness and a sense of being rooted - just like the mountain.

You can relive this image of the mountain from time to time - whenever you need its qualities. You can become this mountain again and again, you can sit like a mountain again and again in between. Mindful, dignified, present and deeply rooted with the earth in true stillness.

Now you say goodbye to your mountain and become yourself again. But you take a piece of it with you into your life, which you now re-enter with all your attention.

You consciously breathe in and out deeply, stretch your arms and legs and come back to the here and now.