

Guided Meditation: *Awareness*

Anthony de Mello SJ was a member of the Jesuit community, based for much of his life in India. He was known world-wide for his retreats and teachings on prayer and the spiritual life. He died in 1987.

"*Awareness* is [his] best-selling guide to the spiritual life, now firmly established as a modern spiritual classic. It uses humour, compassion and insight to help readers into an understanding of the importance of 'awareness' in order to understand ourselves and the world around us. With anecdotes and stories as well as guidelines and exercises in self-help, this book is filled with real wisdom and practical advice. It tackles the universal issues of change, happiness, suffering and loss and also gives direction on coping with love, anger and fear." – from the back cover

The list of contents is a teaching in itself, which repays a *Lectio Divina* approach. Either read the following or listen to the recording to guide you through the meditation. Then you might like to turn to the book and read the chapter of the phrase that snagged at your attention. It may be that the Spirit was simply drawing your attention to the phrase, in which case, continue to sit and pray with this as you go through your daily life. Or it may be that there is something in the chapter as a whole that God knows you need now and on your path ahead.

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Meditation

Take up a posture that is comfortable and close your eyes.

Now become aware of your breathing. Become aware of the air as it enters and leaves your nostrils . . . Not as it enters your lungs, just as it passes through your nostrils . . .

Do not control your breathing. Do not try to deepen it or change its rhythm. Simply observe your breathing, in and out, in and out . . .

Read the following list of contents, slowly. Don't prejudge what you think you will find in it but treat it as a gift to be received. Ask the Spirit to speak through these short phrases. Open yourself to let one of them wink at you. Then put the list down and focus on this phrase. Stay with the phrase, repeat it to yourself, savour it, let it sink in to your heart.

On Waking Up

Will I Be of Help to You in This Retreat?

On the Proper Kind of Selfishness

On Wanting Happiness

Are We Talking About Psychology in This
Spirituality Course?

Neither Is Renunciation the Solution

Listen and Unlearn

The Masquerade of Charity

What's on Your Mind?

Good, Bad, or Lucky

Our Illusion About Others

Self-observation

Awareness Without Evaluating Everything

The Illusion of Rewards
Finding Yourself
Stripping Down to the "I"
Negative Feelings Toward Others
On Dependence
How Happiness Happens
Fear – The Root of Violence
Awareness and Contact with Reality
Good Religion – The Antithesis of
 Unawareness
Labels
Obstacles to Happiness
Four Steps to Wisdom
All's Right with the World
Sleepwalking
Change as Greed
A Changed Person
Arriving at Silence
Losing the Rat Race
Permanent Worth
Desire, Not Preference
Clinging to Illusion

Hugging Memories
Getting Concrete
At a Loss for Words
Cultural Conditioning
Filtered Reality
Detachment
Addictive Love
More Words
Hidden Agendas
Giving In
Assorted Landmines
The Death of Me
Insight and Understanding
Not Pushing It
Getting Real
Assorted Images
Saying Nothing About Love
Losing Control
Listening to Life
The End of Analysis
Dead Ahead
The Land of Love

Continue to chew over and savour the phrase that the Spirit has revealed to you.
It may distil down into a single word . . .
What is it saying to you? What associations or feelings does it bring up?
Why has it snagged your attention now? . . .
Let it sink further into your heart . . .

Now address your ponderings to God.
You might have questions you want to ask. You might want to challenge God.
Or you might want to thank God, or to say sorry, or to say yes.
Offer to God whatever is in your heart . . .
Allow God to respond . . .

Now simply rest in God's presence, filled with God's grace . . .
If you become distracted, return to your breathing or to the phrase or word.
Stay in loving silence before God . . .

Now return gradually to an awareness of your breathing and your posture . . .
When you are ready, open your eyes.

Notes

I wrote this meditation for a one-off meeting of the Slow Book Group at Exeter Cathedral, reading *Awareness*. If you don't already have a hard copy of the book, you can find a [pdf online](#).

The breathing exercise is adapted from another of de Mello's books, [Sadhana: A Way to God, Christian Exercises in Eastern Form](#) (pdf).

The style of the meditation is based on the ancient monastic practice of *Lectio Divina*. Although it is also for use in groups, it is a different approach to the Shared *Lectio Divina* group, which I hold weekly on Zoom. There are many more resources for *Lectio Divina* available on my blog [Grace Upon Grace](#).

Clare Bryden

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