Meditative Story Transcript – Rohan Gunatillake

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ROHAN GUNATILLAKE: Ok, here we are. We wanted to take the opportunity to do something a bit different, something that we hope gives you just a brief resting place to restore and reconnect yourself.

In short, we don’t have a storyteller for you in this episode of Meditative Story, you’ve just got me I’m afraid. I’m Rohan, and your regular host. Our team spans New York, California, and me here in Glasgow, Scotland.

And we’re all of course, working from home. The team asked me if I’d guide a meditation based on this particular moment so that’s what I’m going to do. And let’s start by settling in.

I’m guessing you’re at home like me, so do sit down if you’re not already. Or lie down, that’s fine too. And with eyes open just look around. This is your universe.

You might be feeling constrained, trapped even. You probably miss the company of others. Many of us are working from home, trying to find a way to parent, work, be there for others. So many of us are just trying to figure out how to muddle through in this time of great uncertainty. It’s a time where we just don’t know what we don’t know. That’s okay.

You might also be feeling grateful for what you have here. You might be in a safe place, and feel thankful. At the same time, you may be feeling sad for the situations of others in less fortunate conditions. Acknowledge how you’re feeling about this moment and the space around you. And even if you don’t feel like it, smile. And if you are listening to this meditation with other people, smile with them.

Let the jaw relax. Let the face relax. Let the shoulders relax. There will be tension across your body. Holding all of this. How could there not be? Notice where that tension is most obvious, for me it’s in my shoulders. And if you’re able to, intentionally relax that area. Allowing the body to be as comfortable as it can be right now. And breathing.

The body relaxed. The body breathing. Your senses open. Your mind open. Meeting the world.

I am going to tell you a story. Actually I’m going to tell you three. And while there are so many different themes I could explore that are no doubt live for you, the ones I’ll share are those that are live for me right now. And the first is hope.

I have two children. Arne who’s 4 and Sophia, one and a bit. Getting to spend so much time with them is one of the real silver linings of all this. And while scooting around the kitchen today,
Arne tells me that he is loving spending time with us. Because in his words, “I really do like nursery, but being with Mummy and Daddy and my baby is gooder than nursery.”

One thing that is blowing me away these days is creativity. We’re seeing it everywhere, born out of adversity. The singing on the balconies of Italy, fitness experts improvising online classes to keep children active in their front rooms, artists live-streaming performances.

But you know what, Arne beats them all. He builds worlds out of thin air. He is a magician. The stairs transform into a giant magical tree full of wonderful creatures, its top reaching into and beyond the clouds. Our vegetable box, now empty, is a boat and he pushes it around the kitchen (Sophia sitting within it, delighted).

And when my wife asks what he’s doing: “I’m making a film called ‘A Boat For Two.’ Do you want to hear the song?”

Of course we do.


Sitting here, lying here. Can you allow these words to be part of this moment? With the body relaxed, and eyes open, what magic is here? Even in this moment where we feel confined? Constricted.

I know you might have had enough. And that the idea of seeing the magic in this seems far away. But just try. Borrow some of Arne’s magic. The simple alchemy of a four year old, seeing the world as different to how it first appears and living, living in that magical, that transformed state.

Looking at what is here to be seen. Noticing the details. And choosing to see those details with curiosity, wonder, joy even. Like the palm of your hand. This is an old mindfulness trick. With eyes open, just look at the palm of your hand. Notice any negative thinking such as how dry it might look due to all that handwashing. Letting that go. And just absorbing in the details here in your hand

Isn’t it wild? The shapes the patterns, the mystery. Ordinary magic, available when we pay attention and let go of the negative.

Before this crisis, I would walk my dog Nessie, a barbet or French water dog, early every morning in the park nearby. We live at the top of the park and there’s a fantastic view looking over the west of the city as the sun rises behind us.

And every morning we would see the old Chinese lady who does her daily tai chi there at the highest spot, looking down, a guardian spirit of Glasgow. Swaying, moving, strong, fluid, and graceful.
This morning, with her in my heart, I stand by my front door and faced where she would normally be. I know she’s not there in the park. And what I can’t bear is that I probably won’t ever see her again. We’re all finding this difficult and it’s important to make space for that.

Nothing I can say is going to make the difficult go away. But I am going to invite you to name it when it arises:

Sadness.

Worry.

Guilt.

Good old fashioned fear.

Heartbreak.

When the difficult is present, name it. So with the body relaxed as much as it can, see if you can notice how you are feeling. What is here to be named? And name it.

Confusion.

Doubt.

Anger.

Numbness.

The feeling of not being sure.

Name what is happening.

We are in a moment when it is entirely natural, indeed expected, to have difficult emotions take center stage. And the act of naming the difficult, bringing just a sliver of awareness, can diffuse its power to stick around. It’s ok to feel how you’re feeling. In fact it’s essential. And remember that when you are aware of what is happening within you, then there is mindfulness.

The third story I want to share is one of appreciation. When I’m not hosting Meditative Story, I work for the National Health Service here in Scotland, making technology for clinicians, care workers, and citizens.
And in our team we have a group of doctors who spend some of their time with us and the rest in their regular practice. And right now they are all on the front-line. As are my sister and brother-in-law down in England. She’s a kidney specialist and her husband, an anesthetist.

So I hear on a daily basis about the incredible work and sacrifices they and their colleagues are making to serve us: 12 hour shifts. Night shifts, my sister’s first in seven years. Fears around their own health and that of colleagues. Their young daughters in makeshift schools. The girls upset and confused as to what is happening.

You too may know clinicians and care workers yourself. Or you will have seen them on the news, near you and around the world. With them in our hearts, and with eyes closed, let’s close off this meditation with them, for them.

Thank you.

May you be well.

Near and far, known and unknown.

Breathing.

Breathing.

If you like, you can bring a hand to your chest, connecting with the area around your heart.

The delivery drivers.

The people keeping the food systems working.

People for whom the idea of working from home is a luxury, because what they do requires being out and about, ensuring the systems which our lives depend upon.

Thank you.

May you be well.

Bringing for whom you are most grateful to mind. Holding them in your mind. And just repeating the phrases:

Thank you.

May you be well.
Letting these phrases orient you towards appreciation.

Breathing.

Breathing.

Breathing with those around the world for whom that is difficult.

May you be well.

May you find strength.

Breathing.

Breathing.

Breathing for those who find it difficult.

May you be well.

May you find strength.

And finally, turning the light around to point at yourself. Because at times like this, we deserve our kindness just as much as anyone else.

May I be well.

May I find strength.

May my days be touched with magic.

May I be well.

May I find strength.

When my mind is full of the difficult, may I acknowledge that, be ok with that.

May I be well.

May I find strength.

May we be well.
May we find strength.

Thank you.

I hope that has been some help.

If there are any themes that you would like us to explore in future weeks then do let us know. You can find us on social media as Meditative Story or at meditativestory.com. Thank you. Knowing how much Meditative Story is loved and appreciated across the world has been a source of great solace for me. So thank you. And see you soon.

Take care.