

*Offerings of the  
Broken Heart*

*A Guided Meditation*

*by Lynne Schaefer*

Sit comfortably... with your feet flat on the floor and your hands resting in your lap...If it feels ok to you... gently close your eyes...or you can direct your gaze down... onto your hands or the floor.

Now take a moment to feel your body...Start with your feet...feel the contact with the floor...where the pressure is on the sole of your foot... how your toes feel... your ankles. Notice the calves of your legs... and your knees. If you come to any places of tightness... discomfort... pain... stop and take a moment to gently breathe space and release into those places. Just imagine yourself breathing a softening into those tight places.

Now move up to your thighs and feel the chair you are sitting on... notice where it makes contact with your body and just notice what that physically feels like. Move upwards into your hips and your belly. Stop a moment at your belly and consciously relax it. That's it... just let it go. Holding our bellies tightly in all the time makes deep breathing quite difficult... and it tends to constrict us in other ways as well. So let's all let our bellies relax... and now take a deep breath right into your belly – fill it up! And exhale. Every once in a while go back and check to see if you've tightened there again... and relax.

Now travel up your spine feeling wherever there is tension... breathe softness into that space. Take a moment to feel your chest and the space between your ribs where your heart rests. Notice your ribs moving as you inhale and exhale. Notice what other parts of your body respond to the movement of your ribs. Perhaps your shoulders... your back...Now see if you can focus on the beat of your heart... just check lightly in to that space in your chest and see if you can feel the life pulsing through you...Stay with that for a few moments...Without judgment... without thought of changing or fixing anything... just feel it... breathe in gratitude to that life that beats within you.

Now let your attention wander up to your shoulders and neck... take all the time you need to breathe space and softness into any tension you may find there. Or simply rest your attention on how those parts of your body feel.

Finally... notice the muscles in your face. Relax your jaw... your cheeks... the muscles around your eyes...See if you can feel the sides and back of your head. Place your attention on the top of your head... the crown...See your breathing... feel the beating of your heart... notice any sensations you may have on the crown of your head as you do so... or simply let your attention lightly rest there.

Now take three big breaths... Inhale all the way into your belly... and when you exhale... let any tension drain out with a sound. Inhale... really deeply....and exhale with a noise. Feel the tension draining away. Inhale...exhale... inhale...exhale...good.

Now I'm going to lead you into a guided visualization. Try to keep your belly relaxed... your breathing even... your body loose. Take care of yourself. If any of this doesn't feel right to you... just go back to the body scan... or rest your attention lightly on the breath. And remember... the most important meditation instruction there is... you can't do it wrong... Try to let go of the critical thoughts... the dismissive thoughts... the 'I can't do it right' thoughts. There is no right or wrong here... only acceptance of the experience... whatever it may bring.

Bring your attention back to that space around your heart. If you can... feel the velvety soft darkness that your heart resides in. It's a place of great comfort... spaciousness... and softness. Just rest your attention right there on your heart. Now imagine not only your physical heart... but also your emotional heart... the heart-mind it is sometimes called. The place where your emotions reside. Whatever image comes to you for this is fine – really... anything at all – even no thing... just let these words wash over and through you.

If you've ever been teased... or left out... or slighted in some small way... you will notice that there are tiny cracks... slivers really... running along the outside of this heart. See if you can bring to mind an instance of a small hurt this heart has suffered... maybe one that you didn't even allow yourself to feel before... because you had 'hardened your heart'... See now that this heart... the one inside the armor... has these tiny slivers running all through it; be compassionate to it... to yourself... poor heart... Now bring to mind some of the larger disappointments and hurts this heart of yours has suffered. The job you didn't get... the furious scolding of an angry parent... the nights spent alone when it seemed everyone else was out with someone else... Whatever feels like a larger hurt... something that lingered for more than a few days... see the cracks in your heart caused by these hurts... Finally... if it feels right to you... allow yourself to bring to mind one of those hurts that has broken this heart wide open... leaving jagged edges gaping... The loss of someone you love... the deep sense of not being enough... alienation... isolation... whatever wound it is that your heart has suffered... and continues to suffer with. Hold it gently in your mind... feel this heart bearing these great pains... breathe compassion... strength... love... softness right into this pain.

Now return your attention to your breath for a few moments... Breathe out any

tension or pain this has brought up but continue to hold onto the image of your heart... with all of its slivers... and cracks and jagged wounds... Just hold that image lightly in your mind's eye... Now notice something new. Streaming out of all of those broken places... bright... shining... white light... Anywhere there is a crack in the wall... there is light streaming out... and the larger the crack... the more light that comes pouring through. This is the light of Shechinah... the Presence of God which dwells within the sanctuary of your heart. This light comes pouring out of you... the offering of your broken heart to the world... Just sit with that image for a moment... all that Divine light streaming out of you... out of your broken heart... to illumine the world wherever you are... It's not anything that you have to do... it just is. Sometimes our armor... our hardening... traps that flow of light out of us... and no one else can see it... and even we are not able to feel it... But as we discard that armor... bit by bit... as we soften up... more and more of that light streams out... as we feel that light... it becomes easier and easier to release the armor... to live with our hearts unguarded in the world. To allow the Divine Light that is never ending to flow unimpeded from our hearts... as our offering to ourselves... our families... our friends... our communities... our world... and our God.

Just sit and imagine that Light shining in you... and out of you and all around you... Now return your attention to your breath. Just notice yourself breathing... in and out. How's that belly? Relax it... When you are ready gently raise your gaze or open your eyes... Try to stay aware... if you can... of the Light in you... and in the person sitting next to you... and in all the people here. Every once in a while just let that thought spring up in your mind... of the Light that is always shining in all of us... waiting to be seen.