



MIND

# *Come Rain or Shine*

In April we listen out for changes in the weather, not wishing to be caught out by a sudden shower. We become sensitive to a breeze picking up, an unexpected stillness, changes in light levels or temperature. In just the same way we can adopt a soft listening to the whole of our lives, checking into the weather in our mind, listening for the first signs of change in mood not wishing to be caught out by a sudden downpour of emotion.


Each shower changes the outer and inner landscape we inhabit and our challenge is how to respond. Do we close down, hunch our shoulders and scowl at the inconvenience? Do we indulge in our irritation and annoyance? Instead can we choose to remain spacious, seeing how, as with any change, we are being invited to experience a different perspective? Can we let go of our need for the weather to be a particular way?

We have all experienced how April showers can come 'out of nowhere' and leave just as quickly. Knowing this gives us the confidence to wait out the shower, recognising it will pass sooner or later. In the meantime, it's our choice whether we walk in the rain, listening with refreshed senses to the sounds and smells or just get wet and rage impatiently at the weather not being the way we want.

This uncertainty drags us out of the torpor of automatic pilot, calling us to take a fresh look at the environment around us, to engage in the present and explore our relationship to the unpredictable bringing a new vitality to the humdrum. Can we stay with not knowing how the weather will be and smile at the freshness and immediacy such uncertainty brings?







After the showers comes the shine, and with it the invitation to be present with the pleasure of the moment, not knowing how long it will last, but being with the moment as it arises, grateful that right now it is like this. If we worry how long it will last, and try to hold onto our experience then we drop into thoughts and fear of loss, anticipated disappointment and so lose the preciousness of the moment. It's like the exquisiteness of a single piece of Belgium chocolate, and then the feeling after eating another 10 pieces. In our desire to extend and repeat our experience, it has been changed and altered beyond recognition.

If we embrace each moment for what it is, without expectation, we have the opportunity to be balanced in our response come rain or shine. So, for example when we reach the last couple of days of our holidays and are saddened at the approaching end, why not instead treat that time as we would a looked forward to weekend away? Just enjoy the moments of shine right now rather than project to the time they will be lost.

We can take this approach onto the mat in our yoga practice. However it is today, whether rain or shine can we stay with it as it is, knowing that sooner or later it will change? Constantly changing sensations in our body reflect our mood and wellbeing drawing us in and out of balance. Cultivating a soft listening allows us to work with sensitive awareness revealing how any emotional turbulence is held as a physical response in our lower back, the seat of our emotions. Working this way, our lower back becomes a barometer of balance, giving us an early warning of a change in our weather.

There is nothing like attempting a posture we find challenging such as an inversion or backbend with this approach to fully expose where our thought patterns are at precisely that moment. These can reflect long held reflexes – such as the “I can’t do it” or “I don’t like it” mind. If we can learn to release the tension in our mind underpinning these thought patterns and reflexes, our body simply unlocks: with our mind in balance our body is light and free and our practise becomes effortless within our capacity today, come rain or shine.

## CHECKING INTO THE WEATHER IN YOUR MIND

Here is an exercise in cultivating soft listening using a breathing space. It is a simple and effective way of looking at our personal barometer. Whatever time you have, 3 seconds, 3 minutes or more you can use the breathing space to check out the weather.





## TRY THIS:

Close your eyes and ask yourself, what is the weather like in your mind right now? It's like glancing out of the window, what do you see? Clear blue sky, stormy clouds, fog, is it night time, morning? How do you feel about it? There is no right answer just like there is no 'right weather'; it's just whatever it is. Now ask yourself if the experience in your mind is pleasant or unpleasant and just register your response.

Then cast your mind through your body starting from the crown of your head all the way through. Stop at any point of tension or tightness, or sense of blockage or obstruction, and in a single breath expand the sensation to fill your mind's awareness and on the exhale smile not because you are happy (though you might be) but to release facial tension and then relax the tension inside your head and around the edges of the location in your body. Do this without the expectation of it changing; the softening is rather an expression of acceptance. This tension, ranging from subtle to a real gripping tightness is key, a sure sign that our barometer has moved from fine to changeable. Continue on and pass all the way through your body.

Stay smiling, and just become aware of your breathing enough to know how your breath is, deep or shallow, quick or slow, smooth or ragged, regular or not. As you breathe in, smile and notice how this makes you softly aware of all your body, as you breathe out smile again.

Then expand your awareness from your breath to include all of your body. The sensation in the soles of your feet, the touch of clothing, the air or the warmth of the sun or touch of the rain, your lower back, the sensation in your spine, your facial expression.

As we pack our umbrella to accommodate the weather's moods, don't forget your breathing space and smile for your own moods.

**“If you expect  
your life to be  
up and down,  
your mind will  
be much more  
peaceful.”**

**Lama Yeshe**

**WRITTEN BY**

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