



Oolong Tea

Slowing down



Imagine you are inside a cave. It is a beautiful dark space with a crystal clear pool of water in the middle. You feel really safe here and protected. You have built a lovely fire next to the pool, that is burning brightly, flickering warm shadows around the cave walls.

Approach the pool and use your hand to bring some of the cold clear water to your mouth and take a drink. Feel its coolness run down your throat and as it enters your body, imagine a pure silver energy contained within each drop, cleanse your body of the tensions of the day. Then remove your clothes and go for a swim in the pool. Feel the cool water on your skin, allow it to wash away all the grime of the day.

As you get out of the pool, you go and sit by the fire, there is a warm blanket there to wrap yourself in. As you dry off and warm up, begin to ask yourself what has been bothering you, what thoughts and niggles have you arrived at this moment carrying?

Think first of your work and your day to day life. Are there expectations, stresses or worries that you are still carrying? Take a deep breath in and then breathe out any niggles into the fire.

Now think of your family, your friends and of your relationships. Are there expectations, stresses or worries that are bothering you? Again take a deep breath in and then breathe out any frustrations into the fire. Watch them disappear into the flames.

Now think of the pressures you put on yourself. Are there things you should be doing? Is your to-do list never ending? Are there expectations, stresses or worries that you have created for yourself? Again take a deep breath in and then breathe out any self-criticism into the fire and watch it disappear into the flames.

As you sit gazing into the fire, feel the weight lift, the load lighten. Notice the space left when you are unburdened of all these stories you tell yourself, all these stories you hold onto inside. Just be OK without any of them for this moment.

In this place, you are free from all memories of the past, you are free from all concerns for the future. You are free from all responsibilities. Just feel content as you sit by the warming fire and gently close your eyes.

Take a long slow deep breath in, hold it for a moment and then slowly exhale.

Take another deep breath and feel yourself start to drift into a more relaxed state.

Bring your awareness to the top of your head. Feel that sense of deep relaxation start to spread down from the top of your scalp, across your forehead. Feel your temples relax. Allow your eyes, your cheeks, your jaw to soften and feel all tension dissipate.

Now allow this gentle relaxing feeling to flow down your neck and deep into your shoulders, soothing the muscles and releasing any tension. Feel it flow down your arms, continuing to breathe deeply, all the way to your fingertips. The peaceful sensation flows through your chest, your stomach, all the way down your spine. Feel the whole of your lower body relax as the soothing feelings flow down your legs and into your ankles. Ask yourself, by just sitting here for a while, what did you miss? Feel the strength of this moment of being and not doing and try to anchor a little of it as you return to your every day life.

When you are ready you can slowly return to the present. Begin to come back to your body and your breath. Feel the breath in your body. Feel the ground beneath you. And then when you are ready open your eyes.