

Returning to the source

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13 February 2026

From Laurence Freeman, “MED: The Lovely Prefix.” [Medium, Sep. 2025](#)

Med- is my favourite prefix. Think of how often it appears in words that speak of balance and connection: (not to forget ‘Medium’ itself), middle, median, mediate and in particular, for this reflection: Meditation and Medicine.

The prefix is an Indo-European root which denotes doing the right thing, taking appropriate measures — wisdom and good judgement. It connects with the sense of “care” and “attention” in everything: thought, feeling and action. It is finding balance, the centre of gravity by returning to the source. Going back to the root, as Chapter 16 of the Tao Te Ching describes it:

*Resting the mind in stillness,
The perception of all things arise and fall together
And in their arising is their return. Like flowers and leaves,
They grow, flourish, and then return to their root.
Returning to the root brings peace,
A peace that recognises
No difference between self and other
And appreciates awareness
As completely perfect just as it is.*

When you go for medical advice you expect to receive personal care and attention. You know immediately when this is authentic and willing or when it is deficient, distracted and false. Part of healing itself, as well as the efficiency of the hoped-for cure, depends on receiving this caring attention. In the same way, when we meditate we are practicing on and in ourselves a caring, loving attentiveness at the deepest level, deeper than the level of the ego. It releases the wholeness, health and holiness of the Self, the Spirit.

In our golden age of medical science the art of healing is frequently discarded. Medicine then becomes an entirely left-brain activity, treating the disease not the whole person. It is urgent that we restore the human connection between the art of prayer and the art of healing, supported not absorbed by science. In an age characterised by anxiety, isolation and depression, this connection illuminates the integration of spirituality with mental healthcare. Psychology done with the personal care and attention that nurtures the therapeutic relationship should not just categorise, medicalise and objectify the state of mind or mental illness. It should give that care and attention which is nothing other than pure, detached and engaged love.

So getting the meaning of meditation, offers a way for restoring and sustaining mental health in a society so psychologically damaged and spiritually undernourished as ours. It teaches us how to transform the scourge of self-destructive loneliness into the wisdom of solitude.

Care and attention is connection and connection is, well, everything.

After Meditation: Eternity, William Blake (Public Domain/poets.org)

He who binds to himself a joy
Does the winged life destroy
He who kisses the joy as it flies
Lives in eternity's sunrise