Discovering the Power of Basic Goodness  Through the practice of meditation, says CAROLYN ROSE GIMIAN, we liberate all that energy we’ve been wasting on our habitual defenses and neuroses, and we discover windhorse, the never-ending energy of our basic goodness.

The sitting practice of meditation is a tool we can use throughout life to connect with the heart and mind of warriorship beyond aggression, beyond violence toward ourselves or others. The dignified and upright posture that we assume in meditation demonstrates the strength of our connection with bodhicitta, awakened heart, or basic goodness as Chögyam Trungpa calls it in Smile at Fear. To work with others, we need both strength and openness. So the awakened heart of meditation is an open heart, which expresses gentleness and vulnerability.

Meditation also provides a sense of being grounded—connected to the sanity of Earth. Resting the body in this way is resting the mind. In Smile at Fear, the meditation instruction stresses identifying particularly with the outbreath. Through the simple act of joining our breath as it goes out, we develop confidence. We can be that breath as it goes out and dissolves into a big space. And then, in the gap, we breathe in. Then, out we go again. Fearlessly, with eyes open, we connect with our aliveness as human beings.

Throughout practice, because we are human beings, living beings, we have thoughts, we have emotions, we have feelings. In and of itself, our mental chatter is not a problem. All that mental activity is a pretty good sign that we’re alive! It is part of the genuineness of our life. Sometimes, however, we lose track of our being and become totally lost in thoughts and storylines. Therefore, while acknowledging thoughts and emotions and actually honoring them in our meditation practice, we also label them “thinking” and come back to our breath and back to our seat, our grounded posture of meditation.

In the practice of meditation we may contact a bank of energy or richness, which in Smile at Fear is called “windhorse.” This is the energy that we work with all the time in life. It’s not something new. It takes a great deal of energy and intelligence to sustain confusion and habitual patterns. Essentially, we always see the way things are. We actually do. One could say, we are the way things are. But out of such things as doubt, insecurity, and anxiety, we are afraid to acknowledge what we see, so we put a lot of energy into constructing a wall to protect ourselves from the raw and rugged quality of our life. By creating this heavy wall of ignorance, we cut ourselves off from the reality of life.

Through the practice of meditation, we start to see the transparency of that barrier. In meditation, we begin to take down that wall, sometimes brick by brick, so that the energy, or the power of basic goodness, begins to be released. The energy that’s been going into maintaining the wall of confusion, divid-