

## **Greg: Agents of ALIS: Episode 8 – Meditation Practice**

*(After Episode 6)*

*Breathe in.*

*Hold for 10 seconds.*

*Breathe out.*

*Wait 10 seconds.*

*Repeat.*

As I sat cross legged in the dirt, I tried desperately to remember the meditation exercises Geordie taught me all those years ago. He said he had learned them from some offworlder as part of a 'tip' for some fresh fruit he hold sold them.

I needed something to reflect and calm me down. I'd been marching for over two weeks. I was hot. Tired. Agitated. And that was before they even got to the site.

After setting up the beacon, Tema went straight to Libby's crystal and just sat there, talking to her. Telling her of our adventures. Pep Pup asked if he could join and keep Libby company. Roscoe was with Gracie. When he wasn't taking watch, Kai was sulking in the corner in the underground chamber. Their guide was taking watch. Silent Reading was off... somewhere, and Sol-Edge had decided to guard the entrance to the chamber.

Taking the opportunity to go off on a walk, I realized that this might be the most alone I've been... in a very, very long time. I was on a city planet before the Professor found me, and once Pep Pup came into my life I've very rarely had any alone time. And with only a few allies, some hostiles out there somewhere, and what other Nagalisities there are, this is probably the most alone I possibly can be.

*"No, Kyrt, you're still tensing up too much! The dude said you gotta relax."*

*"I am relaxed."*

*"You're not. Your shoulders are all bunched up, all six of them. Focus on your breathing, and let your muscles un-tense."*

"I'm trying." I realize too late that I say aloud. I bound up, limbs flailing, worried that I embarrassed myself in front of everyone. Kai laughing it me, Silent shaking his head, Tema and Roscoe rolling their eyes. However, it does not seem like I'm about to be attacked or belittled.

Sitting back down, I recenter my breathing and try again. But my mind is too abuzz. I'm still just utterly spent, and we haven't really got to work yet. We still gotta unite these disparate villagers before we even start. Then the ALAS folks gotta come in and do their work. And is it just temporary, or are they here 'til the end? How long will we still be here? Months? Years? How much of my life I am going to have to waste-

*"You're still too upset! Just go out, in, it's not that hard."*

*"But Geordie!"*

*"Don't but me, butthead. Let go. The guy said the key to meditating is to release."*

*"But there's so much we still have to do. We don't even know when we're gonna eat next-"*

*"And that's a problem for later. For now, just relax, and quiet yourself."*

It almost feels like his hand is on my shoulder. Like I'm gonna turn around and he's there. And then I'm going to start crying. Because he's not. He's never going to be again. But to give in to that pain means there's more emotions I gotta calm. He's not here. No one is. I am alone.

*Breathe in.*  
*Hold for 10 seconds.*  
*Breathe out.*  
*Wait 10 seconds.*  
*Repeat.*

Somehow I brute force my way through meditating for what feels like it's an eternity. Just repeating those 11 words over, and over, and over. It's hard to stay focused for that long, but it's an area of my training I'm neglecting. I look at my phone. Clock says it's only been five minutes. I've still got a few hours before my turn on guard duty. I should either stick with meditating or get some sleep.

Inevitably, I do neither. Part of me, in this environment, feels like stargazing, but it'll be hard since the sky opens up into the "black hole" and the event horizon above us. I feel like I shouldn't stare at it for too long. This impossible landscape with its hateful ground, cruel buildings, and uncertain future. I hate it. I hate all of it. I hate this planet. I hate how these people have been hurt and are having to rebuild. I hate that we are forced to help them whether we want to or not. I hate that I've been alone. I hate that I've been pent up. I hate it, I hate it, I hate it.

Why me?  
Why them?  
Why us?  
Why do I have to be responsible for this? Why do I have to carry their pain? Why am I now damned for seemingly unending cycles of losing people again, and again, and again, AND AGAIN, AND FOR WHAT?

*Breathe in.*  
*Hold for 10 seconds.*  
*Breathe out.*  
*Wait 10 seconds.*  
*Repeat.*

I was going mad. I had to stop. Sitting on the hard dirt, I tried meditating again. I'm surrounded by quiet. I keep trying. It's mostly just a crutch. I'm not at peace. There is no peace. I doubt I'll find any for a long time. But I keep trying.

*Breathe in.*  
*Hold for 10 seconds.*  
*Breathe out.*  
*Wait 10 seconds.*  
*Repeat.*