

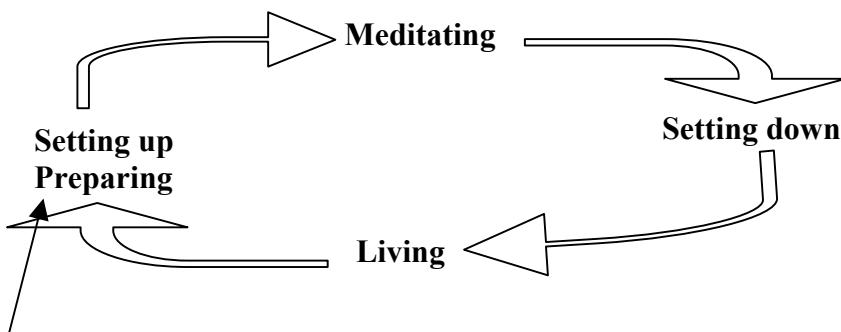
Meditation 2 Week 1

Introductions – choose a picture, say why and everyone write name up on flip chart.

General introduction to course

- Will get out of it what put in
- Helps to practise regularly, even if for short time each day – can have CDs if don't have already
- Will be provided with diaries to help and give ideas of what to practise
- Helpful if you let me know if not coming. If do so week before then I can give you the appropriate diary – **take email addresses**
- Will be exploring various ways of working in/ playing in meditation.
- Will be also exploring ideas for bringing meditative ideas into the rest of life.

Outline of the course



Helps us make the transition from life into a meditative mode

This week will be looking at setting up and preparing. If we create appropriate conditions, meditation will be easier.

We are going to do 10 minutes of mindfulness of breathing (done in whatever way you like – could just focus on 3rd stage) and will have 3 minutes to set up.

Do it.

Discuss experiences.

Choose something you do regularly, such as shopping, or going to a meeting, or going swimming and spend a few minutes thinking about the preparation you do. What

difference does it make if you prepare well. What is good preparation? Share with partner.

What is good preparation for meditation? What works for you?
Divide ideas into external vs internal

Go through sequence:

- check posture – creating the seat can be part of the ritual
- Take in the space you are in. Go through the senses: look, then listen.
- Go through people's ideas, allowing time for each

Then do 10 minutes mindfulness of breathing.

How did that compare to the previous meditation?

What kind of emotions are useful for meditation?

Traditionally useful to cultivate confidence, contentment and enthusiasm. How can we develop these emotions?

- In what ways do you have them already?
- Explore making small improvements, e.g. increasing confidence by half a point.

Exploring values – why are we meditating?

Going to explore values as these give us a direction – **not goals**.

Think of things which move you positively and the values behind them:
Examples for me:

- Jeni giving asparagus to Imi (generosity)
- Countess forgiving count at end of Marriage of Figaro (forgiveness and beauty)
- Friend telling me about very personal feelings about her mother (connection)

Write up values on flip chart.

How are these values aided by meditation?

Intentions

General and specific intentions.

- Why are you meditating?

- What qualities are you trying to develop?
- What meditation your are going to do
- How you will practise – diaries give ideas

Do longer meditation:

Give 5 minutes to set up in whatever way they choose – bringing in values and emotions

Read poem.

When all thoughts
Are exhausted
I slip into the woods
And gather
A pile of shepherd's purse.

Like the little stream
Making its way
Through the mossy crevices
I, too, quietly
Turn clear and transparent.

RYOKAN

20 minute mindfulness of breathing

Feedback?

Handout on setting up.

Diary for week 1.

- explores setting up
- mindful moments

Setting up: preparing for meditation

Introduction

It is worth spending time creating the conditions for meditation before beginning formal meditation practice. It helps to be in surroundings which are quiet, aesthetic, not too hot or too cold and where you are unlikely to be disturbed.

Below is an example of a sequence you might follow in setting up. You may find parts of the sequence require more attention than others. You may need to cycle around a few times and even return to some aspects during the meditation.

- It is generally easier to go from the external, your surroundings, to the internal, your experience, and from the obvious and easy to the more subtle.
- It is useful to bring *kind* awareness to your experience.
- It is a good idea to vary the set up to take account of how you are.

A possible sequence for setting up

1. **Posture** Spend some time ensuring that your posture is comfortable, dignified and relaxed.
2. **External** Direct your attention consciously to your environment, using different senses, for example, looking around, listening for sounds, and feeling the contact of your body with the ground and seat.
3. **Self** Then consciously direct your attention to your inner experience, such as noticing any thoughts that are present, becoming aware of your body by scanning through it sequentially, and becoming aware of your emotions.
4. **Intentions** Choose the practice you are going to do and form a clear intention of how you are going to work in the practice (e.g. kind awareness, being in the present)

Then start the formal meditation practice.

Some suggestions

- You may find it helpful to start by spending some time tidying your space or making it more beautiful.
- Before you start the sequence for setting up, you could try reading something you find inspiring, such as a poem or something about meditation or your values.
- With the metta bhavana you might like to concentrate more on emotions and be aware of and develop the feelings of contentment, confidence and enthusiasm.
- You could experiment with asking questions, such as, "How am I already prepared? To what extent am I already confident?
- If your mind is wandering during the meditation, you could try bringing your awareness to your body again before returning to the formal practice.

Meditation 2

General points about the course

In this course we shall be exploring together various ways of approaching meditating. You will gain most if you explore the ideas during the week, for example by using the meditation diaries.

If you miss a week, it is helpful if you can let me know beforehand, either by phoning the Buddhist Centre or by sending an email to sagaraghosa@ntlworld.com. If you give me your email address then I can send you the diary for the coming week, any handouts and let you know what we are exploring this week.

Meditation diary

The meditation diary is to help you track progress in your meditation in the coming weeks and to help you learn more about yourself. Try to fill it in every day. Notice that there are only six days on each sheet so you can have a day off if you want. If you don't practise, then cross off that day.

It is probably helpful to allow a few minutes after your practice to reflect on anything you have noticed or learnt and then make a note of it. We shall have some time reviewing each week and you may find this sheet useful for that as well.

It is worth taking the time to prepare well rather than rushing into a longer meditation session. You may find it helpful to spend 5 to 10 minutes preparing, 15 to 20 minutes meditating, and about 5 minutes afterwards reflecting on what you have noticed and learnt. If you want, you can use meditation CDs to help you, either following the led practices or using the tracks with just bells and silence.

Mindful moments

It can be helpful to increase your mindfulness throughout the day. Each week there is a suggestion for mindful moments. This is an idea for a mindfulness practice that can be taken into your everyday life. You may like to try out the ideas and see if they make a difference to your meditation practice, or indeed to the rest of your life.

Suggested reading

The breath Vessantara (a clear and practical guide to the mindfulness of breathing practice)

The heart Vessantara (a clear and practical guide to the metta bhavana meditation)

Wildmind: a step-by-step guide to meditation Bodhipaksa (based on a successful on-line teaching resource)

Change your mind Paramananda (a best selling introduction to meditation)

Meditation the Buddhist way of tranquillity and insight Kamalashila (a comprehensive guide to the theory and practice of Buddhist meditation)

Our acts of voluntary attending, as brief and fitful as they are, are nevertheless momentous and critical, determining us, as they do, to higher or lower destinies.

William James

Meditation 2 – Setting up

Luck is what happens when preparation meets opportunity. Seneca

This week we are focusing particularly on setting up the meditation. It is worth taking the time to prepare well rather than rushing into a longer meditation session. Try to find out what you can do when setting up that helps with the formal practice. Aim to spend 10 to 20 minutes on the formal practice.

	Practice	What I noticed or learnt
Day: When and how long	Mindfulness of breathing <i>Pay especial attention to your posture. What happens to your posture during the meditation?</i>	
Day: When and how long	Metta bhavana <i>Spend some time at the start of the session bringing awareness to any sounds you can hear and focusing on the qualities of the sound.</i>	
Day: When and how long	Mindfulness of breathing <i>Work out an order in which to bring awareness to the sensations in different parts of your body in turn and end with awareness of your whole body.</i>	
Day: When and how long	Metta bhavana <i>After becoming aware of your body, bring awareness to your mood or feeling tone.</i>	
Day: When and how long	Mindfulness of breathing <i>If you notice any tensions in your body, make them the object of your attention for a while. What happened?</i>	
Day: When and how long	Metta bhavana <i>Before you start meditating, bring to mind why you are meditating and how you are going to practice in this session.</i>	

Spend a few minutes reviewing the week and make a note of anything you have learnt.

Mindful moments Every time you are waiting, for example, before a meeting, in a shop queue or for a computer to boot up, bring awareness to the sensations of breathing.

Meditation 2 week 2

Introductions

In 3s discuss what did last week how you have got on meditating during the week.

Questions?

Reminder of what we did last week:

- setting up as preparation to meditation

How do we set up for metta bhavana?

- developing contentment, confidence and enthusiasm
 - can develop enthusiasm by reflecting on why meditate
 - can develop confidence by reflecting on what have learned and how you are benefiting
 - can develop contentment by reflecting on what appreciating
- kind awareness
- thinking of what people to choose
- choosing way to practice in the meditation
- remembering our intention
 - On flip chart make list of positive qualities which can be enhanced by this meditation

Do metta bhavana meditation with set up going through these points

Balancing effort

The theme for today is balancing active and receptive effort.

Meditation can be divided into four types, which are also ways of working:

- concentrative – focus and sustain attention on chosen object, being active
- receptive – where don't make any particular effort and are just open to your experience
- generative – bringing something into being
- reflective – contemplating a theme such as interconnectedness

These are all present in all meditations, but the emphasis changes. We shall be looking at the first two ways.

Like getting to know someone,

- active by asking questions
- and receptive by listening to the answers.

The same sort of dialogue can go on within ourselves.

Like taking dog for a walk:

- can go on a tight lead so always walks at your heel
- or on a long lead so can explore a bit more

Can make the wrong type of effort. Imagine that have a plant that is wilting. Can try to make it grow straight by pulling it upwards, but will flop again as soon as you let go. Better way is to make sure that it has enough water and sunlight.

Can also make too much effort. Story of disciple of Buddha, Sona whose feet were bleeding because he was doing so much walking meditation. Sona wondered about giving up the spiritual life because he wasn't making progress. The Buddha told him about tuning a lute.

We are going to experiment with being more active and more receptive while being mindful of the breath.

How to go about it:

- **Active**
 - wise use of discipline
 - object is to gain more control of the mind
 - actively follow the sensations of the breath from where it enters your nostrils down through your chest into your tummy and back up and out again
- **Receptive**
 - Letting things be without changing them
 - Settling the mind in its natural state without wanting it to be different
 - Like watching a wild animal or bird. Just watch what is happening.
 - Having curiosity, kindness and appreciation of your experience
 - Sometimes use the image of watching your experience like watching clouds float across the sky

Any questions about how to do this?

Experiment with being as active as possible and as receptive as possible. 4 minutes alternating being active for 30 seconds then being receptive for 30 seconds.

Feedback on people's experiences.

Exploring balancing the two ways of working:

- If too active can be too tight and impose our idea of breathing
- If too receptive can become caught up in wandering thoughts
- Like tuning a musical instrument

When setting up then making an effort and then can relax when meditating.

Also can be helpful to deliberately change mode a bit during meditation as may have a tendency one way or the other.

Story about sometimes needing to turn right and sometimes needing to turn left.

Mindfulness of breathing with receptive periods:

- Actively aware of sounds, then letting sounds wash over you
- Actively aware of parts of the body, alternating with being receptive to the body
- Actively aware of emotions, then receptive
- Actively aware of thoughts, then receptive
- Aware of breath, then just relaxed and receptive – if time do all 4 stages with receptive period at end of each.

Meditation 2 – Balancing active and receptive effort

What I dream of is an art of balance. Henri Matisse

This week we are practising alternating exertion and relaxation in order to be balanced at any given moment.

	Practice	What I noticed or learnt
Day: When and how long	Mindfulness of breathing <i>Try using the body to help balance your energy levels – taking your attention to your breath low in the body if you are speedy and high if you are tired. What do you notice?</i>	
Day: When and how long	Metta bhavana <i>Use phrases, but leave a space after each to feel your response. So say the sentence and then wait and notice any subtle response.</i>	
Day: When and how long	Mindfulness of breathing <i>At the end of each stage, spend a few moments relaxing your effort and being receptive to your experience.</i>	
Day: When and how long	Metta bhavana <i>Use your imagination to allow the metta to come from another source e.g. some inspirational figure, and enjoy participating in their influence.</i>	
Day: When and how long	Mindfulness of breathing <i>At the start of the session, reflect on the benefit you have already experienced through doing mindfulness of breathing and future potential benefits.</i>	
Day: When and how long	Metta bhavana <i>Instead of trying to develop metta, take it for granted that it is already there, so all you need to do is picture each person and relax into your deeper feelings of well-wishing.</i>	

Spend a few minutes reviewing the week and make a note of anything you have learnt.

Mindful moments While driving or riding your bike or walking along the street, notice if you are rushing. What does that feel like? How does it compare to taking your time?

Meditation 2 Week 3

Review of last week.

Discuss experience during week.

Are there any times in ordinary life when it is helpful to think of balancing effort?

- work and play
- getting to sleep
- conversations

In meditation value of ‘just sitting’ at end.

How is being active and receptive relevant to metta bhavana?

Metta bhavana with active and receptive and just sitting at end.

Focus and broadness

Theme is focus and broadness. We have the ability to narrow the focus of our attention and we do it naturally. It is useful to start with one or two examples so we have a sense of what it is like.

Experiment:

1. focus on candle flame (2 mins)
2. Take in the background and context of flame, or relax focus to take in more of the space – a broader picture, but less detail on the focus.
3. Focus on the candle flame and have a broader awareness as well – perhaps alternate between focus on the background and focus on the candle.
4. Discuss how this compared in small groups.

Now let's try with the body:

- Look at your hand. Can look at the whole hand. While doing that be aware that you can choose to focus on a finger. Take the pointing finger and choose to focus on that while keeping an awareness of the whole hand. Then go to the middle finger, ring finger and little finger.
- Now moving to having a sense of the feel of the hand. It may be easier to close your eyes. You can choose to focus on just the pointing finger ... the second finger (with a sense of the whole hand) ... the third finger ... now the little finger.
- Now keeping an awareness of your hand, broaden the awareness to your arm and shoulder.

- Now bringing awareness to the connection of your shoulder with your body, and broadening your awareness to your whole body and the contact points on the ground.
- Now exploring having a focus on one part of the body while keeping a broad awareness of the rest
 - for example, a focus on the contact points with the ground
 - or the sensations of breathing
- When ready bring awareness back to the room

Any comments on the exercise?

- About having a continuum of attention. Like a camera when put it out of focus to realise where the focus is. When have a continuum it is easier to keep attention on object of meditation.
- If attending to sensations of breathing, can relax attention to whole body then zoom in on breathing, then relax into sense of being in the room, then zoom in on the breath again.

There is an advantage to setting up in broad awareness and then attending to the breath with broad awareness.

- For example including noise in broad awareness.
- If attention is on a scale it is easier to recover.
- When distracted can aim to keep some attention on the breath, rather than focusing intently on the breath and then finding yourself absorbed in something else – more of a continuum. It can help to stabilise concentration.

Experiment:

- Bring awareness to self sitting in the room, body in the room
- bring in awareness of the breath
 - then focus on the breath
- bring awareness out to the body in the room and further to sounds
 - then focus on the breath again
- Do once or twice more
- End with relaxing effort and being receptive.

Ask for comments

Mindfulness of breathing with broad awareness. – just sitting at end

If someone asks
My abode
I reply:
"The east edge of
The Milky Way."

Like a drifting cloud,
Bound by nothing:
I just let go
Giving myself up
To the whim of the wind.

RYOKAN (trans. John Stevens)

Give out diaries

Meditation 2 – Focus and broadness

The voyage of discovery is not in seeking new landscapes but in having new eyes. Proust

This week we are exploring developing a broader awareness while still maintaining a focus on the object of meditation: the breath or cultivating metta.

	Practice	What I noticed or learnt
Day: When and how long	Mindfulness of breathing <i>Experiment with broadening your focus to include an awareness of your body in the room and then focusing again on the breath.</i>	
Day: When and how long	Metta bhavana <i>When bringing to mind a friend, you may like to think of them within a group of all your friends.</i>	
Day: When and how long	Mindfulness of breathing <i>Every time you are distracted, bring your awareness to your whole body before focusing again on the breath.</i>	
Day: When and how long	Metta bhavana <i>In the first stage you could try to develop an appreciation of your efforts in the past, and imagine your future self appreciating your present efforts.</i>	
Day: When and how long	Mindfulness of breathing <i>If you are distracted by sounds, you could try to keep some attention on the breath while noticing the sounds.</i>	
Day: When and how long	Metta bhavana <i>You might like to experiment with having softer and less defined divisions between the stages. So having developed metta for yourself, you allow your friend to join you and gradually transfer your attention to them, and so on.</i>	

Spend a few minutes reviewing the week and make a note of anything you have learnt.

Mindful moments Before a meal, contemplate the food on the plate before you and name every force – human, environmental and mechanical – that contributed to bringing this meal to your plate.

Meditation 2 Week 4

Remind people about focus and broadness.

Discuss practice in small groups.

In real life, how can focus and broadness be useful?

- In music listening to one instrument among many
- Keeping perspective about emotions
- perspective about people – things like and don't like

How could you apply focus and broadness in metta bhavana?

- think of one person in group of people
- less distinct boundaries between stages
- appreciating yourself through time

Do metta bhavana applying these ideas.

Becoming more familiar with mental states

What happens when you meditate? What mental states come up e.g. sleepiness or irritation. Going to meditate with aim of discovering as much as possible of what is happening.

- Taking a few moments to get an overall sense of how you are being right now, any thoughts that might be present or feelings or sensations in your body.
- Having an intention to be more fully present with your actual experience in this moment, as best you can just enjoying and appreciating being here, becoming more aware of *however* you are.
- Bringing a friendly attitude of curiosity, attitude to whatever you experience as you move towards cultivating a more relaxed, alert, and calm state of mind.
- Now attending to how you're **feeling** at this moment, developing a sense of your emotional experience, being open to whatever you're feeling, whether up, down, or in between.
- As best you can bringing a kindly, allowing, attitude to whatever you are finding or not finding as you are exploring your emotions.
- Perhaps imagining your feelings to be water. Is it warm or cold? Is it still or choppy? Is it clear or muddy? Does it have any plants growing in it?
- Becoming more aware now of the **sensations in your body**, perhaps feeling the contact of your body with the seat or the floor, and having a sense of sitting here in a relaxed and upright position.
- And now, for a couple of minutes, bringing your awareness through the whole body part by part, beginning with your toes and feet, noting any sensations or absence of sensations in each part as you scan through...and concluding the body-scan by resting here with an awareness of the whole body...
- And if your attention wanders while you are doing this body-scan that's perfectly ok, just noting briefly where your attention has wandered to; perhaps noting 'there's thinking' or 'there's feeling', and then gently bringing your mind back to continuing the body-scan...
- Now, having a sense of your whole body sitting here in a relaxed, dignified posture...
- And allowing your awareness to settle more fully on the sensations of your breathing.

What mental states came up in this meditation or others you have had?
Answers on the flip chart.

Try to group:

Characteristic	Negative aspect	Positive aspect
Too much energy	Restlessness, worry, anxiety	Energy, alertness, dynamic, inspiration
Too little energy	Lethargy, sleepiness	Relaxation, calmness, peace,
Attraction to things, including ideas	Craving, desire	Enjoyment, interest
Repulsion	Annoyance, irritation, aversion, self-criticism	Interest, protecting a value
Doubt	Self-doubt, doubt in practice	Questioning

Also may be some neutral states such as sadness.

Talk about the characteristics of each. Allowing each one to be your experience – noticing your tendencies.

Simile of bowl filled with water and used as a mirror.

Sensual desire	water mixed with dye	colours one's perception
aversion	water boiling	one gets heated
sloth and torpor	water overgrown with algae	stagnation
restlessness and anxiety	water stirred by the wind	tossed about
doubt	dark and muddy water	obscures

Can identify them as Greedy, Grumpy, Sleepy, Anxious and/or Dubious.

Story of car tyres being stolen and woman who went out and bought herself a new pair of pyjamas.

- buying new pair of pyjamas – sense desire
- getting angry and kicking the car – aversion
- needs a nap before can do anything – sloth and torpor
- starts worrying that maybe the car will go next – restlessness and anxiety
- blames herself for where she parked and doesn't know what to do - doubt

Diaries

Meditation 2 – Exploring experience

Traditional description of negative aspect	Metaphor of water	Characteristic	Negative aspect	Positive aspect
Restlessness and anxiety	Water stirred by wind	Lots of energy	Anxiety, worry, restlessness	Energy, dynamic, inspiration
Sloth and torpor	Overgrown with algae	Little energy	Sleepiness, lethargy	Peace, relaxation, calm
Desire for sense experience	Mixed with dye	Wanting something	Craving, desire	Enjoyment, interest
Ill will	Boiling	Wanting something to go away	Irritation, annoyance, aversion, self-criticism	Interest, protecting a value
Doubt	Dark and muddy	Indecision	Self-doubt, doubt in practice	Questioning

Traditional description of positive factors

One-pointedness or one-mindedness	Undivided attention, absorption, focus
Initial thought	Identifying something, for example, a friend
Sustained thought	Dwelling on something, for example a friend
Rapture	Predominantly a physical sensation of pleasure, like anticipation of obtaining what we want
Bliss	More subtle than rapture – like enjoying satisfaction of having obtained what we want, quietude

Meditation 2 week 5

Start with 3 minute breathing space

- Bringing yourself into present moment by deliberately adopting an erect and dignified posture. Ask what is my experience right now ... in thoughts ... in feelings ... in bodily sensations. Acknowledge and accept it even if unwanted.
- Settling your attention on the sensations of breathing.
- Expanding your awareness so that it includes a sense of your body as a whole, including your posture.

Review of last week. Remind them of the analysis of mental factors we found. How we practised acceptance, curiosity about their existence and their counterparts in our bodily sensations.

Can identify the negative aspects as Greedy, Grumpy, Sleepy, Anxious and/or Dubious.

Review of homework and week.

Mindfulness of breathing exploring the sorts of mental states there are in our experience. Will focus on 3rd stage of mindfulness of breathing:

- Overall sense of how you are being right now
- Particularly noticing how confident you feel about how to do the meditation and your own ability to do it. ... As best you can, simply acknowledging these thoughts.
- Now reminding yourself of why you are meditating and the values which are important to you. ...
- Noticing again how confident you feel.
- Now attending to how you're **feeling** at this moment
- In particular noticing the energy level of your emotions – is the energy level high or low? Spending a minute or two exploring this.
...
- Becoming more aware now of the **sensations in your body**.

- And now, for a couple of minutes, bringing your awareness through the whole body part by part, beginning with your toes and feet, and concluding by resting here with an awareness of the whole body...
- Now, having a sense of your whole body sitting here in a relaxed, dignified posture...
- And allowing your awareness to settle more fully on the sensations of your breathing.
- Keeping your main attention on the sensations of breathing, noticing once again your energy level.
- If you have a high energy level, try thinking about something that encourages the opposite feeling, for example, imagining sitting by a peaceful lake watching a full moon. If your energy level is low, you may like to try taking a deep breath and letting it out slowly.
- If you are noticing that your mind is being drawn away from the sensations of breathing, noticing first whether there is any irritation or ill will in your experience, or anything that your mind is being drawn to.
- Now bringing awareness to the physical sensations. If your emotions feel strong, how do you know that you are feeling the way you? Where in your body are these emotions?
- If your emotions are not very strong, simply noticing any subtle feelings as best you can and where they are in the body. Maybe it may help to imagine your emotions to be like water and noticing whether the water is choppy or calm.
- Remembering to keep a main focus on the sensations of breathing while having a broader sense of the body.

Feedback on what happened in this meditation. Go through the way that the meditation was led if it went well for them.

Now going to look at choices we can make in meditation.

Using the four types of meditation.

concentrative – focus on object and suppress other things

generative – cultivate positive factors or aspects

Elements which can be present:

- initial thought – identify something

- sustained thought – dwell on something
- rapture – physical response like a tremor
- happiness or bliss
- one-pointedness, better translated as one-mindedness.

This tells you that thought is part of meditation.

receptive – sky-like attitude, letting go/be – what we did last week

reflective – think of the consequences – most useful for doubt and outside meditation

How can we apply these ideas in actual meditations?

How do they give us more choices?

- calming vs. energising
- paying attention to positive aspects
- asking ourselves questions

Stages of levels of concentration:

- integration
- inspiration
- permeation
- radiation

These are all metaphors. Can have a model of mind and integration is where the mind is in harmony. Sometimes have experiences of inspiration which is like a lake with a stream bubbling into it. With permeation, like a flower immersed in the water. It is deeper than inspiration. When elephant gets into a pool there is a huge splash – like inspiration, but when the pool is bigger, there is hardly any splash and is permeation. Even deeper is radiation.

Suspect that everyone has glimpses of these. Sometimes inspiration can come in terms of visions.

This is the way meditators have translated levels of meditation. But there is a danger of thinking that ought to be experiencing them. But worth looking for them in your experience.

Mindfulness of breathing

- Overall sense of how you are being right now
- Becoming more aware now of the **sensations in your body**.

- Bringing attention to whatever you can appreciate in your experience of your body.
- And allowing your awareness to settle more fully on the sensations of your breathing.
- bringing attention to any seeds of contentment
- bringing to mind an image, such as light, or a calm scene or imagining your mind like water and letting any sediment settle at the bottom so that the water is crystal clear. Noticing that there may be waves on the surface of the water but deep down it is calm.
- focusing on how you are already contented, already enjoying the meditation
- asking questions such as, how could I become more concentrated?

Diaries

Handout

What to do when this course has finished.

Experimenting in meditation

Here are a few ideas for ways of experimenting in meditation with some common mental states. It helps to have an attitude of loving-kindness and exploration towards whatever is happening.

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| Drowsiness | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure room is not too hot and perhaps open a window.• Don't meditate just after a large meal or after doing a lot of physical exercise.• Ensure room is light or imagine a bright light.• Check that your posture is upright and alert.• Open your eyes.• Take a deep breath and let it out slowly.• Notice what drowsiness does to your mind. What are the sensations of drowsiness like?• It may help to focus on the breath high up in the body. |
| Enjoying thoughts | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Focus on enjoying the meditation instead.• Focus on one breath at a time, or just one inhalation or one exhalation. Even one breath is not easy.• Notice your thoughts. You may like to label them briefly as 'planning', 'memory', etc.• Bring yourself into the present by broaden your attention to your body sensations.• In the first two stages of the mindfulness of breathing, make an effort to place the numbers gently and softly at precisely the right place. |
| Worry/ anxiety/ restlessness | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observe it just as it is. Notice what it does to your body and how it makes you feel. Treat it as if you are an interested bystander.• Think about something which generates the opposite feeling, for example a peaceful scene by a lake watching a full moon.• Ask yourself, 'In what ways am I already calm? How can I become calmer?'• It may help to focus on the breath low down in your body. |
| Physical pain | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Get rid of it as much as possible by applying standard treatments, or adjusting clothing, cushions, posture• Breathe into the pain.• Make pain the object of the meditation for a while. Explore the sensations. Notice how there are two things present: the sensation and your resistance to it. Resistance is mental. Relax your muscles. Relax pushing away. |
| Anger/ irritation/ ill will | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What you attend to makes a difference. Attending to faults can make us more irritated, so change to 'What do they do that I like?'• Ask yourself, 'What is happening here? How am I getting so hooked into this feeling?'• Bring awareness to the physical sensations related to the feeling and ask yourself, 'Where is the anger?' or 'How do I know that I am angry?'• Think about what it does to you. Irritation is painful. It is detrimental to your relationships with others. |

Hindrances and their antidotes

Hindrances

It can be helpful to have a really clear idea of how you are not engaging in the practice of meditation in order to remedy it. There are many ways in which you may fail to follow through your intention. Many of them fall into five traditional categories.

Sense desire

Sense desire arises when you are drawn towards pleasant sense experiences, which can also include enjoyable thoughts.

Ill will

With ill will you are obsessed with something you dislike or which annoys you.

Restlessness and anxiety

Restlessness means physical restlessness or arousal and anxiety is mental worry.

Sloth and torpor

This has two aspects: physical sloth and mental torpor. It often manifests as drowsiness.

Doubt and indecision

Doubt may involve lack of confidence in your ability to meditate or in the value of the practice or perhaps in your own potential.

Antidotes

Cultivating the opposite

- There are three parts.
1. Identify what the hindrance is that is distracting you.
 2. Identify what the opposite is.
 3. Identify how to cultivate the opposite and then do it.

A large part of working in meditation is simply being clear about what you want to work towards.

Consider the consequences

You consider what the consequences would be in your life if you allow this hindrance to continue completely unchecked. It is probably best to do this while setting up.

Sky-like mind

Imagine the mind to be a clear blue sky and the hindrances to be like clouds passing by. You watch without getting involved.

Suppression

You just say ‘no’ to the hindrance and push it aside. It works best if the hindrance is weak.

Connecting with our values

Sometimes you just need to remind yourself that you are doing the best you can, and that you made an effort, and even that will help you to achieve your vision.

Meditation 2 – Making choices

In the middle of difficulty lies opportunity. Albert Einstein

	Practice	What I noticed or learnt
Day: When and how long	Mindfulness of breathing <i>If you are repeatedly distracted, shift the focus of attention to your posture ensuring that it's relaxed, balanced and erect.</i>	
Day: When and how long	Metta bhavana <i>Choose a positive mental state you would like to cultivate, see if you can find the seeds of it in your experience and try to cultivate it.</i>	
Day: When and how long	Mindfulness of breathing <i>As with yesterday, as best you can, cultivate a mental state you would like to encourage.</i>	
Day: When and how long	Metta bhavana <i>Experiment with 'considering the consequences' in your life, of allowing unskilful mental states to persist unchallenged.</i>	
Day: When and how long	Mindfulness of breathing <i>Enjoy the breath, one breath at a time.</i>	
Day: When and how long	Metta bhavana <i>Reflect on the things that you do that show how you already care for yourself and others, for example, driving carefully, giving to charity, etc.</i>	

Spend a few minutes reviewing the week and make a note of anything you have learnt.

Mindful moments How does your breathing change when you face difficult emotions?
Take a few deep cleansing breaths. What difference does this make?

Meditation 2 Week 6

Three minute breathing space.

Discussion of how they got on during the week.

Give out handout on working in meditation and discuss.

Review of previous weeks

Setting up:

1. Posture
2. External: looking around, listening for sounds, and feeling the contact of your body with the ground and seat.
3. Self: body scan, thoughts and emotions.
4. Intentions Choose the practice you are going to do and form a clear intention of how you are going to work in the practice

Balancing effort:

- Active
 - wise use of discipline
 - object is to gain more control of the mind
 - actively follow the sensations of the breath from where it enters your nostrils down through your chest into your tummy and back up and out again
- Receptive
 - Letting things be without changing them
 - Settling the mind in its natural state without wanting it to be different
 - Like watching a wild animal or bird. Just watch what is happening.
 - Having curiosity, kindness and appreciation of your experience
 - Sometimes use the image of watching your experience like watching clouds float across the sky

Focus and broadness:

- About having a continuum of attention. Like a camera when put it out of focus to realise where the focus is. When have a continuum it is easier to keep attention on object of meditation.
- We are thinking of ‘with’ rather than ‘either/or’.
- If attending to sensations of breathing, can relax attention to whole body then zoom in on breathing, then relax into sense of being in the room, then zoom in on the breath again.

Exploring experience

- lots of energy – restlessness/ itchiness/ anxiety – alertness, energy

- little energy – laziness / sleepiness/ mental dullness – relaxed/ peaceful
- attraction to things, including ideas – desire for sense experience - enjoyment
- repulsion – ill will/ hatred/ irritation – focus, fascination
- doubt – boredom - questioning

Making choices

concentrative – focus on object and suppress distraction

generative – cultivate quality want to encourage

receptive – sky-like attitude, letting go/be

reflective – think of the consequences

Positive factors:

- initial thought – identify something
- sustained thought – dwell on something
- rapture – physical response like a tremor
- happiness or bliss
- one-pointedness, better translated as one-mindedness.

Mindfulness of breathing bringing in lots of these

Setting down

Three main things trying to achieve:

- to make the transition from inner to outer experience
- to carry over the benefits of meditation into your everyday life
- to re-engage the body

What ideas do you have about how to do this?

1. Widen out awareness from breath to the rest of the body
2. Take note of your mental and emotional states. Have they changed?
3. Bring your attention back to your body and begin to move very slowly.
4. Gently open your eyes.
5. Take in your surroundings.
6. Move the body a little more vigorously and disengage your legs.
7. When you are ready, get up and move on to your next activity.

Metta bhavana if time.

What to do next.

Working in meditation

Changing mental states

Cultivating the opposite There are three parts.

1. Identify your current mental state.
2. Identify what the opposite is.
3. Identify how to cultivate the opposite and then do it.

A large part of working in meditation is simply being clear about what you want to work towards.

Consider the consequences You consider what the consequences would be in your life if you allow your current mental state to continue completely unchecked. It is probably best to do this while setting up.

Sky-like mind Imagine the mind to be a clear blue sky and the thoughts or emotions or bodily sensations to be like clouds passing by. You watch without getting involved.

Suppression You just say ‘no’ to any persistent thoughts and push them aside. It works best if there is not too much emotion involved.

Connecting with our values Sometimes you just need to remind yourself that you are doing the best you can, and that you made an effort, and even that will help you to achieve your vision.

Developing more positive mental states

Remembering your vision Remind yourself of your values and why you are meditating at the beginning of the session.

Focusing on what you appreciate Turn your mind to whatever you can appreciate in your experience, for example what you are enjoying about the sensations of breathing.

Focusing on what is already there Ask yourself, ‘How am I already ...?’ about positive states you would like to cultivate further.

Asking questions Ask questions such as, ‘How could I become more concentrated?’ without making an effort to answer them.

Using imagery You can use images to help you know your current mental state (If my emotions were water, what would it be like?) and to change (Let the sediment sink naturally to the bottom so the water becomes crystal clear.)

Meditation 2 – Exploring positive states

Eighty percent of success is showing up. Woody Allen

	Practice	What I noticed or learnt
Day: When and how long	Mindfulness of breathing <i>Bring to mind a positively moving experience that you have had and try to get a feel for how you were being as you were being moved. How might you experience this quality of being moved while you are meditating?</i>	
Day: When and how long	Metta bhavana <i>You may like to experiment with reading an inspiring poem or reading before you start the meditation. Notice how the subtle thoughts that arise perfume your experience.</i>	
Day: When and how long	Mindfulness of breathing <i>At the beginning of each stage ask yourself, 'What would I be experiencing if I were becoming more concentrated?' Rather than trying to answer this question conceptually, allow it to affect your experience.</i>	
Day: When and how long	Metta bhavana <i>Take a practical suggestion from a previous meditation diary, modify it and try out your modified version.</i>	
Day: When and how long	Mindfulness of breathing <i>Bring to mind a situation where you are happily concentrated, such as listening to music or watching a sunset. Experiment with bringing that state to experiencing the sensations of breathing.</i>	
Day: When and how long	Metta bhavana <i>Experiment with using the breath as a unifying element in all the stages of the metta bhavana.</i>	

Spend a few minutes reviewing the week and make a note of anything you have learnt.

Mindful moments Go through each day assuming each person you meet has something to teach you. Notice if this attitude changes your interactions.