

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