

## 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**
- 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**
- 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**
- 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**
- 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**
- 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.