

# 2014-02-24 Recognize Feel Relax Instructions For Meditation

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

feel, relax, people, experience, holding, meditation, recognize, thinking, mind, step, muscles, body, tension, happening, deeply, relinquishment, meditating, tetrad, nice, deeper

## SPEAKERS

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What I'd like to do this evening is to condense some meditation instructions that the Buddha gave. And then once it's condensed into ordinary English, then explain to you how it appears in the discourses of the Buddha and the instructions he gave for meditation. I think we, most of us assume that most of us but it's often assumed the Buddha was a great meditator and also a great meditation teachers and certainly he started a tradition of meditation and Buddhism, that has continued down through the centuries. The So, this very simple way, three step process for understanding or are for the instructions that he gives for meditation is to recognize to feel And to relax, then nice. So to recognize what's happening to see what's happening, identify what's happening. And then once you've identified it to feel or to experience what they're much more carefully or deeply, so step into it, enter into the experience, once you know it, what it is. And then once you have known it and felt it, well well known and really experienced it, then relax. For some people, it's a huge thing to be able to identify what is happening in their experience. For some people. They're too busy with their thoughts and their activities. And they don't recognize that they're angry or that they're sad or they don't recognize what they're believing what they're thinking. They don't recognize the stress or the strain. They their muscles are living under And so it takes a while sometimes for people to wake up to the full range of our human experience not to have blinders on only seen certain parts of it, only see what we want to see or something, but to be able to see it really recognize what's happening here. And in meditation practice, we are supported in this process, looking and seeing deeply by being really quiet, stilling ourselves, when we when because when we're really quiet when the mind gets quiet, when the body gets quiet, when the heart gets quiet, then it's possible to see much more panoramic Li it's possible to see much more deeply. So it helps us to recognize what's going on. And for some people, the recognition is very, very powerful for some people just to see clearly what's going on is liberating for them. Kind of clarifies or wakes them up to what's happening in a very important way. Also, because of recognition can seem somewhat cognitive, you know, a little bit abstract, you know, recognize what's there, some people can not be so interested in it. It's closely akin to the practice of seeing what's here. And to clearly recognize and clearly see what's here is very close to an act of love. That I have met many, many people now over these many years as a teacher. And one of the very deep forms of suffering that some people carry is when as small children, they were not seen and do not be seen as children is almost the same or is the same as not being loved. And it's very hard to grow up in, in a grew up in a, in a kind of healthy way, without having that reference point of someone who really sees you well and deeply so the recognition part of the practice is we learn to do this for ourselves remote to see clearly what is here. And that recognition is I like to think of as a kind of act of love to stop and really look what is here, and to be honest about what's here, to see the full, the full range of what's here, what's really wonderful and beautiful about ourselves, and also what is challenging about ourselves. For some people, this first step to recognize

might be the primary step of practice for a long time, to somehow keep coming back into the present moment and seeing what's here, come back and see.

The next step is to feel to experience and more filled or fully. And this is where what's what started off as being cognitive recognition of something seeing something becomes a felt experience becomes we enter into the experience. The Buddha talked about entering and abiding in Our experience of what's going on. And so to really feel so if you feel angry, to enter into the experience of anger, and feel it, meditation is a very good place to do this. Because the meditation, you're committed to sitting still, for your period of meditation, it's a great place to feel the rage, for example, because you're not going to hurt anybody, you're not going to move. So you can really feel and experience it. or sadness, or the whole thinking process, not necessarily what you're thinking. But when there's a lot of churning a lot of agitated, agitated thinking going on. It's quite a significant thing to feel to enter into the felt sense experience, what thinking is like, or to feel our body. We live in a culture, I think that I suspect is more disconnected from their body from our bodies than most cultures probably have in human history. Not the means all of you, but there's a lot of it in our society. And so to enter into our experience means to feel in our body to be with it in our felt sense experience of the body. How's it feel right now? And what are the advantages of really feeling or experiencing in the body, whatever is going on, is that the body is not a story. And so it helps us movement out of story making out of just staying in the head around things, and also helps keep us in the present moment. When we really feel or experience something can only experience something in the present moment. And when we allow ourselves to experience something fully take the time to experience it fully, then we get to see it more thoroughly. And there's a wonderful reciprocity that goes on between seeing and feeling. The more we can feel the more we can see more deeply more we can see the more we have to feel or experience. Some people are in a hurry. And so they don't give themselves that time to feel to experience what's going on. And it might take a long time to release Take it in really let it register really what's happening to people in a hurry sometimes when people are in hurry sometimes when it's uncomfortable, what we have to experience. And it's counterintuitive to want to stay present for what's uncomfortable. And so you want to get rid of it as quickly scan or fix it as quickly as you can. But the path of mindfulness is a path that is not about fixing quickly, or getting rid of quickly, but really, a very mature attitude of really getting to know something well. And sometimes that takes we're willing to experience it for a while, hang out with it. So this example of keep using of anger or sadness, to really commit yourself like this, this is the time to get to know it. This is not the time to fix it, to avoid it. To analyze it, this is time just to feel and experience it. Part of the power of this kind of practice of really letting yourself experience something is that it's an alternative. Being for and against an experience being for and against what's happening. Many people really react right away to what's happening. And they have preferences and push things away or credit fix them or, or hold on to them. And this movement I've been for and against is not a movement of freedom, of liberation. And to take the time to not to feel and experience and put aside our preferences to put aside or for and against is a very powerful thing to do. It's kind of liberating in some ways that also the third step is to relax. And isn't that nice?

What's nice about that one thing that's nice about that remains significant about this is the relaxing comes after seeing and experiencing. Take your time to really know something, but once you know it and experienced it, then relax, soften around it is there hold Is there some tightening up in the system in the body and the mind and the heart around it? Is there some contraction pulling away? What's going on physically, and this idea of relaxing for me, is a very strong kind of kind of take connotations is something we feel physically. And so we take this physical experience we have, and this is why entering into it and feeling it fully is so useful, because it gives us access to the places where we can relax. And I don't know if it's true for everyone, I think everyone has their own way. But there's a lot of people for whom there is so many subtle movements of tension within the body. You know, it's not just

the shoulders being tense, you know, just, you know, it's just very, very subtle little minutia of of muscles cannot tighten up and be held, even when we're sitting, you know, in a relaxed way. There could be little muscles, they're tightening up the muscles or the tie or By or the, you know, the fingers are a little bit, you know, all kinds of places. And so it's interesting I can meditation to spend time going through the body. And maybe systematically some people do the body scan, which is go through different parts of the body somewhat systematically, and see if there's some ways that you can release the muscles, relax what's going on. very meaningful exercise that I learned in yoga many, many years ago, was the idea of letting the muscles fall away from the bones. I don't know if they fall away, but the, the image, the image of the muscles kind of falling away or releasing from the bones was meaningful for me. And so I do that movement, sometimes releasing it from the bones. And I don't know if I, you know, I don't know what exactly happens, but in a very minute little way. It feels like it was kind of releasing and opening up.

Another image that I've used for relaxing is to let my I flesh in my muscles and everything expand outward into the skin, like the skin is like the balloon and everything else is on the air that expands the balloon, just let it kind of like fall out and expand. For me that kind of helps kind of thing, soften and relax as well. Maybe that's a strange image for the rest of you, but so to take time to relax and to soften, you know, tension in the body is often a symptom of wanting something. And so and so if we can relax the body that wanting or that impulse that motivation behind tends to also relax the mental force that makes us tense, relaxes when we relax the body. So those three things and if you just do those three things for your meditation, you'll go really far too. just recognize, take your time to feel and then relax. So, that's my condensed version of the Buddhist instruction. Now, I will try to show you how this arises out of the Buddhist teachings in a little bit more complicated way, that that also shows how this can be applied to ever deepening areas of our inner life to our life. And often Buddhist Buddhist teaching are presented as a gradual unfolding gradual path that goes, if you use the metaphor of deep, ever deeper, goes further and further into towards liberation and freedom. And the particulars particular instruction comes from a teaching the Buddha gave on 16 steps of mindfulness of breathing anapanasati so don't be deterred by the number 16 that you're going Sit here and hear the whole list. These Buddhist have lists. The So, these 16 steps to meditating with your breath are divided into four groups called the four tetrads. And each of the tetrads as you go, as you look at how they're described, they offer four practices to do. Those practices can be understood to be variations of See, or recognize, feel, and relax. So the first tetrad has to do with your body, your breathing and your body. Take the time to recognize how you're breathing. Check out your breath, get to know it. As you get to know your bad breath, begin to feel the experience of your body experience your whole body experience. So as you settled into your breathing as you break, stay with your breath. What people often find out is their body becomes more available, they are feeling your body more fully. Take Take time then to feel and experience your body. And then relax your body. Relax, what's caught with the word is the relaxed that then the bodily formations, the technical word. And the formations in your body are those aspects of your body that are formed by your mind, by what activities of your mind. So if you're afraid and your shoulders go up, those tense shoulders are formations are formed by the mental activities, if your stomach goes in, or use all kinds of your posture, and all kinds of there's all kinds of ways in which experience of our body are, are formed by the activity of our mind. Makes sense? And so it's that's what we relax. That extra, that extra stuff we burden our body with because our mind is You know, doing all its machinations. The second test ride is once the body is somewhat relaxed, then you take a step further into the inner life and you feel the, the whatever satisfaction or joy or delight or ease or something that has come from that relaxation. So, hopefully relaxation feels good and kind of feels lighter or something. And so this is where you start to feel allowing yourself to feel that the pleasant enjoyable feelings that can be present when you meditate. Some people never got the message that it's okay to enjoy yourself a meditation. But actually to enjoy yourself a meditation is one of the ways to support you to go deeper into it.

But you don't have to, but don't expect you're always supposed to be enjoying it. Some people are addicted to wanting things to be pleasant and mature meditation practice involves being willing to be present for actually how you are. But as you do this process and how you are be with it, then at some point in our life opens up to some feelings of satisfaction or joy or ease or something. At that point, you recognize that you recognize what's nice, how you're more relaxed, more settled, more presence. And then it says, You experience and feel the mental formations. So remember the bodily formation. So those aspects of your body that are there because of what goes on in the mind. Well, there's also what goes on in your mind is there with how you use your mind. So if you are really anxious about something, you can feel your mind might be spinning very fast, or might feel very small and contract. And tight, because you're so preoccupied with your particular concern. If you've had a nice nap and everything's fine, you've no obligations and just nothing to do. You wake up, then you're very happy. You might feel that your mental formations are met your mind is more characterized by being just open, expansive and relaxed and quiet and calm. So what we're doing with the mind effects, what the mind or the mind state feels like. So now the instructions are to feel this feel this mental state, this mental activity that you do, maybe the word activity maybe is good feel the mental activity once you felt it, then it says relax the mental formations. I find this very helpful with a busy thinking mind. And that those of you have heard this instructions from me and that is many people when they think a lot and very powerful thinking spinning around. You can let go of it maybe for a moment, but it comes right back, or you can't even let go of it because you keep thinking. Most people are concerned with what they're thinking about. And so they're kind of blinded or attracted to the content of their thought, what they're worried about what they're angry with what they want, or something. When we do a meditation practice, a way to turn and experience thinking is not to look at what we're thinking about, just let the content of thoughts take care of themselves, but to feel what the process of thinking feels like for you. And so where when you're thinking a lot, what is activated, what is if what is physically activated in your body? Now you can see it and other people, sometimes people, you can see someone thinking really hard, and they're, the forehead has furrow in it and you know, their eyes are kind of narrow, and so they tighten up and that's part of that connected to the mental kind of experience of thinking that's independent of the content. Or people can feel that their mind is spinning, they feel it's very fast, the thoughts are going very fast. Or they feel that the thoughts are very loud, the thinking is happening very loud, or they feel that there's maybe a physical pressure or tension, or strain can connect you to all that thinking. Some people are surprised to discover that when they tune in, to not the content of their thoughts, but what it's like to be thinking, discover that they're exhausted. I mean, not not conventionally tired, like maybe they got a good night's sleep. But that engine has been going on overtime for decades. And they had no idea because they never noticed never turned into our attention to it. And finally, if you turn the attention to it's like, wow, I am so tired of all this thinking. And I mean thinking is okay, but you know, vacations okay to you know, it's okay to stop, please, you know, and so it's possible then to, it's really helpful I think to turn around and feel let yourself experience the tactile, physical quality of what it feels like to be thinking a lot. And once you recognize that it's kind of, I call it I call it like the thinking muscle.

For me, it's often in, in my head, you know, behind the forehead, kind of where the brain area is that if I'm thinking a lot, that's what seems to be activated, the blood seems to flow there or there's tension there, pressure there. There's a lot of energy there, what's going on. And then I realize as if it's a muscle, I relaxed thinking muscle, that thinking stuff. And if I don't do that, if we don't really lacks the thinking muscle that tension, the pressure that's worrying us to think it's connected thinking that pressure we can let go the thoughts the content, but the pressure remains. And it just remains so just ready to pump out more more thoughts. And you'll wonder why can't you stop thinking big Bob the pressure to think is so strong. So you have to so it helps to relax that so that's the second tetrad. The

third tetrad is to go one step further in and that is as the as the mind state begins to relax as the mind activity begins to relax, then the mind state the general overarching state of consciousness, the mind state becomes more pleasant becomes more expansive becomes more transparent or lucid or something was very nice. And so then to begin appreciating what this mind state is like and then to feel this mind, state That's like, experienced that more fully. And as we start feeling experiencing it more fully, the tendency usual tendency is the mind state starts to get concentrated or settled, or unified, collected, or very switched up words that are connected to the word Samadhi to get concentrating. And as the mind gets concentrated, it gets softer. The mind state gets softer, more open, and then the instruction, it doesn't say relax now, but it's in the family of relaxation. It says liberate the mind? Isn't that nice? So liberate and relax are closely connected. So I don't think this means ultimate liberation, necessarily, but it means to let go of what you're holding on to. Because as you start experiencing the mind, state, the heart states more deeply. You can feel what it's like to actually Be clinging and holding, and doesn't feel good. And it can feel optional. And so at some point as this process goes along, people begin to let go, they don't want to hold on anymore. As we as that. So as we let go the mind let's go more more deeply. Then we move into the fourth tetrad. And here in the fourth tetrad when you're no longer holding on to ideas and concepts and things, we don't no longer see things as being so permanent. Permanent is a current permanence is a concept that's attributed to phenomena by how the mind conceives. And when the mind is no longer attached to its conceptions of things. Then what becomes apparent is how things are quite impermanent. The flux, the change of life, and this flux and change of life is that doorway into the deeper freedom that Buddhism has to offer. And so then as you start experiencing this feeling and experience or to recognize the impermanence and then we really experience and taking it in. Then there's a further desire to not cling to anything not to hold on to anything. Until finally, the last step, the relaxing part in the family of relaxation. The last step in the 16 steps is the word relinquishment. And I don't know what the Pali word is anymore, but the English word I love relinquishment, big word. I don't really know what relinquishment means exactly. But I'll tell you what I think it should mean. What I like about relinquishment, is it's a kind of letting go, you let go. But it's not just letting go. It's letting go with it kind of like a decision. I'm done with that. And now enough and there's something very wise.

In certain kinds of areas of our life, to say, I'm done with it, enough of that, it's one thing to let go of it, you know, for a little bit, but to say, I'm finished with that. So, you know, there's all kinds of things people do, which are not so healthy. I'm done with it. So one of the great things to be finally sick and tired of and be done with, I'm sick and tired of that. There's a healthy way of being sick and tired of something that you mean, I think, if you're really doing this practice, well, sooner or later, you're just sick and tired of certain things. So one of the things that I hope that sooner or later you become sick and tired of doing and you relinquish enough of that is complaining. complaining. doesn't do anybody any good. including you. is one great You know a great definition of enlightenment. Never I can give you the definition you none of you will ever want to be enlightened. When you're enlightened, you have nothing more no reason any more to complain about anything. Nice turn so much for your interest in enlightenment. But would you rather have Billy to complain or to get in like so you know, so at some point you get people get tired of certain activities, complaining, gossiping. A great one to be had enough. Enough of this. I went through this was enough of being anxious. You know, it wasn't easy. I had a lot of anxiety for years and years. It was not easy to overcome it took took a long time. But there came a point where the anxiety was not that strong anymore, and my mind was stronger. And I could see it clearly. And I just you know, it's Enough, you know, I, you know, didn't go away once and for all, but I kind of had this inner feeling of relinquishment I'm done with that. I'm not, I'm not seduced by it, I'm not interested anymore. And enough of this, I'm not going to, you know, give it much authority anymore. And that was a very important step for me. So, to recognize what's happening, to experience what's happening, and then to relax, as you do this process, this last step of relaxing, can take different forms.



At some point, it takes something more profound than relaxing, takes a form of letting go. As the letting go goes deeper, and the whole process goes deeper, then it's more than just letting go for the moment or letting go. But it's a deeper letting go. That comes together with wisdom or a commitment or a or a health. the healthiest most possible way of said you're fed up with enough I'm done with, or it could be a relinquishment because we know something better. We know there's a piece that's so much better than, you know what we're all agitated, you know, being agitated about or something. And so we relinquish deeper transformation relinquishment, and that, for me is a little more permanent or lasting. It's a transformation where we were transformed or changed in some important way. Whereas this earlier step of letting go, we're not yet changed. We just have relief. We have relief from not a longer holding on, but we're not changed, but the relinquishment has to be a transformation. So that was complicated, I know. And so I apologize for those of you didn't follow all those steps. That's why I started with recognize Feel and relax and will end recognize feeling relaxed. That's all you need to remember today. So we have about 10 minutes and if any of you have any questions about that or comments or something else you want to raise, you're welcome to to take the mic and say something

Get past the other one to man there.

So, um Yeah, I just yeah, just an observation with myself ever. Rep. just recognize feeling relaxed was interesting before. Usually like kind of walk before I come in here on Sunday mornings. But for some reason, there was like a little bus stop around the corner and I was like, I'm just gonna sit, close my eyes and meditate for like, like maybe two minutes. And then for some reason, I just felt their urge to do that for some reason before I came in. So, but yeah, you know, sometimes, you know, when you're meditating, you're just there with your thoughts or you're there with your emotions. And it was, it was kind of amazing. I only sat down for maybe two minutes or something. But it seemed more constructive than some of the times when I'm, you know, meditating for 45 minutes or something, but it was just this pain that came up that I didn't did not want to sit with and then I asked myself, when is this pain going to go away and then And then it kind of just hit me. I was like, wait, it's not going anywhere. So just accept it and sit with it and be with it. And then something shifted right in that moment. And this all took place within like 30 seconds. So yeah, I just thought to share it. I see.

So when you finally accepted it then something giveaway. Yeah, yeah. Nice, very nice. So some that's that third step of relaxing sometimes happens on its own, and then necessarily something we have to do so that you did that you did the second step by experiencing it just allowing yourself to be with it. And the relaxing and releasing happen on its own. Yes.

Hello, this is okay. It works.

So I was wondering, wow, I had all that time to think about how to say this, and I didn't use any of it. What about this feeling? I mean, I know I haven't. I don't think I'm alone where you know that some some habit, some thing, some tension inside of you is probably bad for you is hurting you and that you would feel better without it but you don't want to let go of it anyway. Because it's sort of basically how you see yourself. It's it's a large part of who you think you are, and you don't really know what you're going to be without it.

Yeah, I feel lost without it.

Yeah. So what, what would you say about that?

I think, I don't know what I would say but but what I will do is have a lot of compassion for it. A lot of respect. I think that the when we have this cut when we have attachment and holding onto something because it gives us a sense of self or security or makes us you know, or comfort or these are profound things. It's something in our psyche and our heart needs, needs it and so it Be careful with and respectful for it to begin that way and compassionate It's okay. It's not, it's not like you're bad for it or wrong it just it just how causes and conditions to come together so that right now this is something that something inside of you thinks it needs. So start there and then begin looking at and more deeply. take a deeper look at how does this work. And you might look at the beliefs that are connected to it, you might look at what it really feels like. Sometimes it's only by feeling something deeply that we've experienced the cost of it, at some point becomes clear the benefits that we are getting from something like that. Don't Don't even balance out with the costs, the costs are greater. And then we begin we maybe maybe it's okay to let go. And then it's also okay to experiment there. We are getting some if you're getting some benefit from holding on to something. Once you get a sense of what that benefit is, then you can ask yourself a question. Other other better ways of getting that benefit. So if for example your person feels secure and have holding on to something because this is what they're familiar with, security is a good thing to have other more healthy ways to feel secure. And so then with that question, you might be able to investigate and find some other ways to get the same benefit. That then once you find that then it's easier to let go of what you're attached to. So those are some things that come to mind. So be respectful of it, explore it, get to know it better, and, and then look for alternatives. That helps helps me relax. Sets seem okay.

Yes, thank you. Okay.

One thing that I found very useful in driving is holding the steering wheel much more loosely. And I find I find that every time I'm tightly gripping the steering wheel, my drive I'm very intense, very tense. very tense just what's next? Yeah. Whereas when I just let it go a little bit nicer feeling is much more relaxed about what's happening around me. Nice. I feel a lot safer and better my driving

wonderful What's going on?

And some people would be good if they were relaxed around their right foot.

As you were saying that the three things the I noticed that sometimes I do I do them but not necessarily not sure not odor. So it's I immediately try to relax. Then sometimes I feel so It's the awareness of these three things. But it's not necessarily in that exact order.

It doesn't have to be in that it doesn't have to be in the same order and doesn't have to be all three different times different, one different one of those three steps. Seems like the important one. Sometimes it might be a long time where all you do is recognize, recognize, might take take months even just to recognize all person does. And other times it's feeling that the person mostly does, and other times it might be what's really the exploration is how do we let go, how do we relax? So sometimes you can do with all three steps in 10 seconds, sometimes you spend a long time with one and whatever way you whatever way that's helpful for you. Thanks.

This is Mike's here.

Hello,

green curry green light

Hey, I had an experience that was prolonged that had created a lot of anxiety in my body. And that experience is gone now. But I find this a residual anxiety that's still there. Yes, that comes up by itself, without any thoughts that I can perceive, or without anything happening externally in the world to create it. And I just wanted you to speak to that and how to work with that.

Yeah, it's a known phenomena. There we go that there saw the there are residual effects of holding or tension or in our system that hasn't been dissipated, hasn't had a chance to relax fully. There's a variety of things you could person could do. Since we're here doing meditation. I'll miss mentioned the meditation approach. And that is to take the time to do what I just said. Take the time to really Find where that residual feeling tension or holding might be in your system, and really recognize it that's there. And then go and feel it more fully take time to make space like this act of love just really being there for it. And nice image that, for this feeling something that's challenging like this, maybe even I don't know if it's how challenging it is. But something like this is to imagine awareness is like a two cupped hands that come from underneath and just gently hold that experience. So just to this episode rests in the palm of awareness in a sense, so you're not you're not using awareness like a sledgehammer, or, you know, or trying to fix it or do something or pro but it's yours kind of holding in a supportive way and awareness. And then, and then are there ways to that you can release it or let the energy flow and sometimes when there's residual tension or holding or feeling left over from some kind of something that sometimes Something needs to move it's almost just energies has to move. Sometimes people like in a car accident there's like this the residual stuff from the fear of different things. Sometimes you feel that and yet letting letting it move the energy move through the body or kind of release is helps to kind of free it free it because it's frozen. Yeah. And it's the things getting amazing you know, things can stay for decades. Without without giving some care and attention to helping it release. Some things can stay for a very long time.

So Okay, one last one.

So sometimes I find that

I do the I recognize and then I start to feel it and then I mediate just kind of relax out of it. And it feels like

a boarding out of it. Could be yes. So you mean you kind of like you recoiling or jumping out of it?

I don't know if that's what it is. But it's Yeah, it seems like there's more there.

Yeah. But it just great. It's great that you see that, you know, the first kind of approach to all these things, when you see something like that is to congratulate yourself. I see something, you know, it was great. And then if you don't spend time getting to know it better, look for the next time next time it happens kind of study that phenomena. See what happens. And you might have to do that 100 times, but just next time you go into it and experience it kind of No. I go into this and I pull out or pop out what's going on here. We look more carefully. And after the 15th time, the 16th time doing that. Oh, look. Now I understand what's going on. But it takes familiarity takes repeated familiarity of being present and studying and being with it until it reveals itself what's going on. Okay, great. So thank you very much. And I'll be back in I think it's four weeks, probably the last Monday of March and have a wonderful March.