

2019-09-14 Central And Peripheral Awareness

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SPEAKERS

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So when we meditate, there are two general areas of attention. One is what we're attending to. So for today, the topic is mindfulness of breathing. So is learning to attend to the breathing. But the other thing is to become aware of how you're attending the nature of the awareness, the nature of the attention, how the mind applies itself to the task at hand. And, and some people will apply their mind without any self awareness of how they're doing it, and will tie themselves in knots. So I've done that. I've strained I've tried really hard to have high expectations for myself, and he's pushing and training and trying to do something and it didn't ever occur to me. That I should pay attention to that I just that's like, you know, that's the doing, what was important was what I was doing. But how I do it was not. And, and some people focus only on that part, they only focus on how they're aware, which is very helpful, they can sometimes get a very relaxed state of awareness that way, but it doesn't really help them to see clearly what's going on. And ideally, in Buddhist meditation, we're doing these two together, we're both learning how to see more clearly what's happening. And we're learning how to see in a more useful way. And there are turns out that there are actually many different ways of using awareness using attention. And it can be used in different circumstances. We use it in different ways. If you're going to thread a needle, you use a very different attention than if you just kind of relaxing at the beach, looking at the ocean. You know, it's it's very different kind of attention you'd use Each is appropriate for the different settings. So what I like to do for this sitting is to point out that to use as an example, how our eyes work. And I know I'm not a physiology is excited. No, no, I don't know if I have it exactly right. But you'll forgive me it's like close enough. So we have a central vision. And there's a different kind of cones and rods at the back of our retina for a central vision. And then there's also peripheral vision. And they work differently. Those and, and when people apply their eyesight to see they're going to work at seeing something, stare at something that changes. They're using your central vision, that's where the effort the tension, that work tends to be there. peripheral vision is not a place that people work very much. It just kind of relax. It comes in kind of as a byproduct of being aware. And we might focus on something, but we kind of know what's happening around us, someone comes into the field of vision. We know it, but we're not trying to see that. So and I think the only time they maybe actively use peripheral vision, at least for me, is in the dark. Because apparently, the, the parts of the retina that can see in the dark, or there's more of that, than in the central vision part. So that so I, you know, if I'm walking in the dark, I'll turn away slightly from what I'm trying to notice and just notice it through the peripheral vision and I see slightly better of what's going on. So we have these two different things. And if you open your eyes now and look at something, it doesn't matter what and kind of keep looking Got it. But can you at the same time notice that there's also a peripheral vision, there are things maybe not in focus. But things around the edges of that. If you're focusing on something in the room, you might notice there people in the peripheral vision, you don't even notice, you know, you hardly even register the color of their clothes, but you kind of know it's there. And if you work at it, you can kind of notice the color of the clothes. But that peripheral vision, that peripheral vision is there and much more relaxed way for some people than the central

focus. So the same thing exists in doing meditation, and how we use our attention to meditation. There can be what we centrally focus on with our attention, and what we kind of center ourselves on. But there's at the same time there can be what's peripheral.

And as breath meditation deepens, what often happens is that the peripheral vision becomes more expense. more clear things. So like awareness opens up and becomes more expansive. It's this kind of double movement. It is sometimes as we get more concentrated, they actually the field of awareness tends to become expansive and open. Some people talking about the T really feel their, their sense of mind becomes really big or will pro abroad, even though it's gotten very narrow in a certain way, because they're really staying just with a breathing. If you can know the difference between the central vision central awareness is focused awareness and the peripheral awareness. Sometimes you can play with a little bit and you can, for example, stop using the central vision to be with a breath, but kind of take it in with a peripheral vision. You might not be with it was as much detail, but you can feel as much more relaxed To be with it, little bit, maybe, but it might also be not quite anchored. Because even then you might drift off into thought more easily. But you can kind of like, kind of experiment a little bit, go back and forth and see what that's like. The reason I'm telling you this now is that as people get settled into their breathing, start getting more settled and present for their, one of the things that sometimes begins happening is they become more aware of their body. In that peripheral vision kind of wakes up and, and there's a possible to stay with their breath, but also then become aware of their body. And the way the instructions are given for mindfulness of breathing, is to breathe, continue to breathe, be mindful of breathing in and breathing out. But at some point, as we get more more settled, is to open up and become aware of the whole body as we breed The advantages of that, as you start feeling the whole body or much of the body, you can start feeling the tensions in the body, the holding patterns in the body. And then the instructions are, after you've noticed that is to keep the central focus be on the breathing. But then with a peripheral attention, relax the body. So you're not making it a big project to relax the body, which is kind of in a relaxed way, their peripheral vision, you're aware of it and you soften as you kind of stay with the breath. So that makes some sense. So hopefully it makes enough sense. And so we can maybe see how this goes now. So establishing yourself here in your body in this place.

Because of the strong tendency of the mind to sometimes wander off and be anyone anywhere, but here and now sometimes meditation is all that's needed is just a relaxed, ongoing way. Say the word here to yourself. Just that is enough here and every time you become here, remember to be here. You're stepping out of the mind that's there and then you're weakening the forces of thinking About there and then you're here.

Some people find it useful to say here in this body

here with this body

body is always here and now the mind not so often. So the mind and body work together. It's the task of aligning the mind, connecting the mind to the here and now of the body

and then within the body as part of the experience of body Notice how your body experience is breathing.

And that experience of breathing is allowed to be any way it shows itself to you.

Notice how the experience of breathing in the inhale is different than the experience of exhaling. physically there are different sensations that come into play.

And as you notice the inhale and exhale. Which of those two experiences is clearest for you? Are they both equally clear? Which is the easiest for you

And then let yourself focus on the experience of breathing. While you notice you're aware of what's the peripheral attention, what's around the edges of awareness. As you focus on breathing.

You might not be aware of it so clearly what's there in the peripheral attention while you focus on breathing

And hopefully relaxed attention of the peripheral awareness. Take in the experience of the body. While at the center, you're breathing in and breathing out

Perhaps in the peripheral awareness, there's a sense of awareness without self without the Dewar without the one who controls or works. There's just awareness that's more open and peripherally things come into awareness on their own. The focus is on the breathing.

And if it happens that your peripheral awareness feels more relaxed or spacious or open

Can you import some of those feelings of being relaxed to the central vision as you focus on the breathing

And to whatever degree you're focusing on your breathing with your peripheral awareness relax the body maybe Every time you exhale, there can be a wave of softening that goes through the body.

Wave of calming through the body.

peripheral vision, peripheral awareness. Relax into the experience of breathing.

Allow the edges of awareness to soften. Relax

The peripheral vision, soften, relax the body. And but as you relax, maybe there can be a relaxing into the breathing, further settling in just the experience of breathing

thier gentle peripheral vision, peripheral awareness. Let go of your thinking and as you let go of thoughts settle more deeply into the experience of breathing