

## Practice Notes: Awareness of Distraction

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**August 27, 2025**

**Keywords:** mindfulness, awareness, present moment, distraction, meditation object, open mindfulness, attachment, grip, practice, attention

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It's not uncommon for people to be so distracted they don't know they're distracted. And the idea is to change that. One of the ways to change that from being distracted, of course, is to practice mindfulness. But even when we practice mindfulness, we're able to be in the present moment, it's fairly common for people to interpret mindfulness to have a kind of mindfulness attention of something, like, for example, breathing. So the focus is trying to be with the breath, or being with the breath, or walking with the steps as we walk. Some place, some way of being in the present moment.

There's other ways. It's just sometimes just more open mindfulness. And so we're trying to be present for whatever the predominant experience is of the moment. But in this way, there's always a subject for what we're aware of. One of the ways to not be distracted is to be attracted to the quality of how you're aware. So not so much what you're aware of, but how you're aware.

So I can hold this striker that we use for the bell. And I could grip it really tight because it's very special. It's been here for many years. I'm attached to it, and I don't want any of you to take it. And I'm going to hold it really tight. I'm going to hold it tight the whole day when I'm here.

And my hand starts going white, and people are wondering, what's with this guy? Just gripping this. It creates a whole thing. So that's one way of holding it. But I don't notice that because I'm so concerned about the striker. Another way of holding it is to hold it like this.

Maybe I want to offer it to one of you so you can have the opportunity to hit that bell. It's really nice to hit the bell and learn how to do it. So here, you know, it's offered or just hold it lightly. Maybe I need to hold it because I'm going to use it soon, but I can hold it lightly

like this. Just not really the central thing that I'm doing. Hold close to my heart. Just hold it lightly. Okay.

So the same way with awareness, when we're being mindful, when we're knowing what's happening, some people grip it. I've known people who held on to their, whatever the object of meditation was, like breathing, like it was a lifesaver and they're not going to let go or they'll drown. And maybe in some ways they will. The inner life is quite difficult. But to grip it or to attack it, I've done the attack approach to mindfulness. If I just use a bazooka of awareness and laser, it'll just zap things away. Like, I don't like what's happening, so I'll just really be mindful and make it go away. And so the object is what's important. Or we're distracted by the object. We're certainly in the present moment, but it's like, is this the right, yes, this is a striker?

I'm feeling it. Is this the right striker? Am I holding it the right way? Maybe I shouldn't be gripping it as tight, maybe looser. Maybe I shouldn't be holding the touching at all, the metal, the leather part. Should I only be doing the wood? But maybe if I hold the wood too much, the light, you know, on and on, you know, am I holding it the right way? You know, and so I'm certainly present for it, but I'm kind of distracted also with all these questions and what am I doing here?

So how you're aware? Can you be aware lightly but clearly? Can you be aware without gripping, but also not wonder floating away? Okay. Can it be somehow, can you be attracted to how you're aware? Can it be nice to be aware? Wow. It's like a nice spring breeze to be aware, to know what's happening. How can I lighten up? How can I lighten up but not fade away from it?

How can I not be too casual, too easygoing? Because then I might drop the striker or something. Right. So can you adjust how you're aware, how you know, how you sense, how you feel? So you enjoy it. So it's nice. It is possible. And then your awareness, your ability to be present will be more attracted to being aware than attracted to your distractions. But if your distractions are more interesting... than how it is the process of being aware, you have to feel sorry for your mind, or feel somehow, you know, appreciate. Of course the mind's going to wander off if it's nicer not to be aware, or it has better things to do, like wonder how to hold a striker.

So hopefully that gives you something to think about for today as you practice or experiment with. And thank you for being here.