

Tuesday sit with instructions (week 2)

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From time to time, allow yourself to feel, sense, know any tension that might be in the body or mind. Part of growing the sensitivity to feeling the body, sensing deeply, is to be able to recognize even the subtlest forms of tension, tightening, pressure, constriction—not to make it a problem. The quieter we become, the more it can be a wonder. This too, to feel, sense the body. At the beginning of a sitting, maybe doing a body scan, maybe with a rhythm of breathing, moving down through your body to see what areas can soften, relax, open up. Each moment of relaxing, softening, opening, let it be at the beginning of a few second journey, a few moments journey of opening and sensing what's there after softening.

You might start in the head, in the area of the face, around the eyes, especially on the inhale, to sense and feel tension or tightening. It's okay that you're doing it. It's enough just to know it. It's also okay at the beginning of a sitting, on the exhale, to soften in the face, to allow the muscles to fall away from the skull. Maybe you can relax a little bit more in the face. If you lessen any pressure between the lips, soften the jaws.

On the inhale, feeling the shoulders, shoulder blade area, feeling it on the inhale and relaxing or softening on the exhale. If nothing relaxes, if tension remains, that's okay. Maybe there's a softening around it, or a softening of the attitude about it. On the inhale, feeling the area around your heart, maybe around the solar plexus. On the exhale, softening, relaxing. If there's any tension there related to fear or bracing yourself, pulling away from life, hold that kindly.

Then also soften on the exhale. On the inhale, feeling the belly. On the exhale, with no ambition for success, soften the belly. On the inhale, letting your attention spread widely through the body. On the exhale, let there be a global release in the body. Then move to the area of your brain, behind your forehead, in between your ears, and feel, sense, if there's any tension there, constriction, feeling of solidity, weight, pressure.

On the exhale, relaxing the thinking muscle, relaxing the brain area, softening the brains, and letting it relax. The brain softens and melts into the surrounding stillness, into the surrounding space, where there's no sharp line between the mind and the space around it. Relaxing, softening the mind, calming the mind, calming the activity of the mind so that if there's thoughts, the end of the thought dissolves into the space around the mind. We use the metaphor that the mind wanders off and then we bring it back. But the mind never goes anywhere. It's always here.

The mind can have an interconnection, interpenetration with the space around it, the silence around it. The mind has no size, but so can feel far and wide as space around you. Awareness as space. Mind is vast space. Has room for everything that arises within it. The mind doesn't have to move for things to be known, for thoughts to float through.

The mind is not only in the brain, it's wide and broad, encompasses the whole body. Anywhere there are sensations, it's all within the mind, within awareness. Without moving the mind, without engaging the mind, allow the sensitivity of the belly to feel the movement of breathing, or the sensitivity in the middle of the chest, or in the tip of the nose. Without moving the mind or directing the mind, let the body itself, in a particular area like the belly or the chest or the nostrils, let that part of the body be sensitive to the sensations of breathing, the brain not needed. Tension not needed, where the dedication to staying with breathing does not occur from the brain, but almost happens within the sensation itself. Right there in the body there's a gathering, a welcoming, a sensitizing that will stay close and intimate to the whole inhale, the whole exhale.

A way of sensing that does not require any tension in the brain, any tightening, not even any effort in the brain, the part of the mind that's in the brain. It's almost as if the effort, the gentle effort to stay with breathing, flows out of the sensation itself. Maybe you can feel with the inhale a subtle brightness, a subtle brightness, the light of energy or aliveness. On the exhale, a subtle relief release, a pleasant relief release that spreads just beyond the edges of the sensations of breathing. If there's any pleasure in breathing in, allow it to expand, to flow, radiate out toward, out into the body, careful that the mind doesn't tense up. Mind doesn't get active to do any of this.

It's almost as if there's a mind in the sensations of breathing itself. All arises from there, allowing the pleasure of breathing in to spread gently. If there's any pleasure in exhaling, let that spread. And maybe it spreads in a little different direction than the inhale. In order to bring a little more brightness and pleasure, you might ever so slightly make a half smile, just enough that you feel the delight, the brightness. Not too much.

Careful that the thinking mind doesn't tighten up. Mind doesn't need to move. And with a smile, maybe there's more brightness to any pleasure connected to the sensations of breathing. And maybe it's not the breathing itself, but the radiance or glow beyond the edges of the sensations. Staying close to that center of sensitivity. That's the center, centered to the experience of breathing. So that the sensitivity to breathing there is continuous without any strain, supporting a spreading of well-being, contentment, pleasure, that the body is open to receive.

Gently, serving the mind and body for any extra attention there might be, any that might be easy to release. And if it doesn't release, let yourself be easy about it. It's okay. It can all be held by the wide still mind, the wide space-like awareness. Maybe there's a way of practicing that doesn't involve activating the brain. It's more an allowing something to grow from deep within, a growing of sensitivity that allows for continuity, a growing of stillness that spreads a wellness, a delight in being aware, that spreads a feeling of care. Some sense of peace that encourages release of whatever you're holding on to, releasing yourself back into the peace. Maybe you don't have to be so much the doer of practice, the time will come that you're the allower of something that can grow, something that's allowed to be born, so you can abide here in this home. Thank you.