

Thursday sit with instructions, week 2

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There is a freedom to be had with always being a beginner, starting fresh, starting with what is willing to take things as they are, and meet them with awareness. But as experienced beginners, we can begin appreciating that great value, the specialness of being aware. With *satipaṭṭhāna*, we begin appreciating the different means, different avenues for being aware, for attending to our lived life. We can know, we can recognize what is happening, not only in a very simple way, but a way that arises from an inner depth. For a way doesn't just skim the surface of things, but comes from a place of profound care, caring attention, caring recognition, knowing that or recognizing that this is a natural thing for the mind to do, to know, to recognize. It doesn't do it just intentionally as a doing.

It's work to know. It does it in a very natural way. Maybe non-verbally. Maybe barely verbally. There's a naturalness to knowing. And so part of attending to our experience is to remember to allow knowing.

Satipaṭṭhāna begins with breathing to allow the simple, ordinary, natural way of knowing. It begins with such an amazing, simple instruction to help us feel or sense how simple it can be. To know you're breathing in a long breath. To know it's a long exhale. Other times to know it's a short inhale, short exhale. To allow and notice how this profound, caring way of knowing can operate as we center ourselves on breathing, as our care, maybe even our love, orient itself to the experience of breathing.

And then the second way of attending, of being aware, is to sense, to feel the sensations, that as we're breathing in and breathing out, to allow the body's capacity to sense, to operate naturally. Sometimes it can feel as if the whole body opens itself up or turns itself inside out, so the sensations of the body show themselves naturally to our senses. And sometimes staying oriented towards breathing can make the sensing simpler. Breathing in, allowing

the sensations of the body, being open to them as they show themselves, but not getting hooked, not getting fixated. Breathing out, allowing the sensations of the body. As the mind becomes quieter, the sensing of the body can become attuned to the profound sensations, the sensations that seem to glow, glow, or spread a little bit, that they're wide, deep.

Many of them providing a form of pleasure, assurance as if you're feeling the body. The body will reveal where there's tension, either in the body itself or in the physicality of the thinking mind. And to feel carefully, lovingly, quietly the tensions without fixating on them. Perhaps by just gently staying with the rhythm of breathing, maybe feeling the movement to relax, to let go, that's within the tension. And there too, there can be an allowing, a remembering to allow yourself to feel the tension and feel the movement towards release. Without concern, with success to be aware in a deep, loving, respectful way, where we don't overlay agendas or expectations, desires for it to be different.

Instead, to find the more profound way, the more caring way, to be aware. Calm awareness. Calm knowing. Calm sensing. That reminds the thinking mind. Things are okay.

That reassures the thinking mind. You don't have to think so much. It's okay to relax, become quiet. And sometimes we're aware with a mind's eye, observing, and observing, which again is not a doing, but more an allowing of clarity, a spacious clarity within which things are known, the seeing that's possible. When the mind is expanded, awareness is brought, so it's easier to leave things alone. Each thing that's known kind of floats in the vast space of clarity.

Each thing that's known is allowed to be itself. Nothing more, nothing less. And all of this, all of these profound ways of being aware can support an intimacy with the breathing body and abiding in the breathing. Where it isn't so much about the breathing, but it's about how we are intimate with it, with an awareness. The awareness connected to our depth of sensing and knowing, maybe our depth of care and knowing in an expanded mind, spacious mind, in which thoughts seem to evaporate, dissolve, as knowing and sensing, watching settle into the deep mind, the deep source. It begins to reassure the surface mind, for now things are profoundly okay.

The surface mind with its tensions can soften, settle, no longer struggle as if resisting the settling pull of gravity. At different times, awareness is centered on different foundations of mindfulness. Sometimes what's clearest and most alive is sensing the sensations of the body. Sometimes what's most simple and alive is the sensations of pleasant and unpleasant, the play of these feeling tones. And sometimes it's mostly pleasant, warm, cozy, sweet, joyful, happy, spreading through the body. And sometimes it's more the quality of the mind.

The nature of how the mind is experienced may be expansive. Sometimes in the expansive mind, phenomena become simpler and simpler. And sensations, experiences seem to arise out of nothing, arise out of space and disappear into space, dissolve. What matters the most in this *satipaṭṭhāna* practice is not what you're experiencing, but how you experience it, how you know it, how you sense it, and the how can be how you're available for knowing and sensing, how you allow for these natural capacities to operate without any tension, but in a way that allows for a sense of intimacy and belonging here. Okay. You stay close to the practice.

When you allow awareness to operate closely, you allow yourself to be aware more than you allow yourself to carelessly wander off in thought. Carrying awareness more than careless thinking. Music