

Tuesday sit with instructions, week 4

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Liberation. A big part of this practice is discovering the many aspects of a liberated heart, a liberated mind. It can be just, some of these aspects can be discovered in ordinary life, even busy life. Some of it can be discovered on retreat, in meditation. And it isn't so much that you will be liberated. In fact, for most of us, we do well to be liberated from ourselves.

In one of the areas of liberation, what gets liberated is our capacity to know the very ordinary, simple, human faculty of awareness, knowing, sensing, observing, where these are allowed to function naturally, freely, without any tension, pressure, willfulness, without the awareness being hijacked by attachments, fears, desires, where awareness is not recruited for any purpose. Awareness set free, a frequent guidance offered during this retreat, has been learning how to know and sense calmly, maybe even slowly, where we don't see awareness as a hammer or drill to bear down on something, but to know calmly. The act of knowing, sensing, is more like the opening of a possibility, a beginning of a journey of discovery, pulling the curtains, to allow what's in the world to be known and seen, to begin a journey of discovering what it's like to be aware when awareness is not aware. Under the power of whatever we're thinking about, awareness is not directed by our thoughts, desires, fears. What is awareness like when it's not distracted, lost from itself by being absorbed in distractions and thoughts?

So in this meditation, I'll offer you some suggestions for how to know awareness, to know your knowing, to recognize how it can be free. But first, it's good to be settled. And I'll offer you an image that maybe can support a deep settling coming to rest here. First... The image of a very still lake, no wind, no current, clean, clear water with a wide, smooth basin, lake bottom, and all that water rests, rests on the bottom of that basin. And imagine that you go out into that lake on a small rowboat, on a nice calm day. In the middle of the lake, you can

look over the edge of the boat and see the bottom of the lake. It's so clear. The bottom is maybe 30, 40 feet away, below you. And you have with you a small stone, maybe a small flat stone. You lean over and place the flat stone on the surface of the lake and release it. And you watch that stone slowly descend down into the lake until it comes to rest on the lake bottom.

And now sitting here with awareness, the whole body being your lake, allow yourself to drop into that lake. Slowly you settle, floating down into your body, deep into your body, until something settles on the lake bottom here and now, centered on where you've come to rest, allowing everything that's above in your body to relax, in whatever way is easy for it to relax, to soften. And to sit here without expectations, without goals and purposes. To have expectations and goals in an active way is to have tension. It's a way that you then channel awareness to be at the service of the expectations and goals.

What is known? What comes to you naturally as things that you know, that you don't direct, that arises easily, maybe spontaneously, unplanned? What are the things that are happening in the present that the mind recognizes, knows, in the simplest possible way? Maybe it's a non-verbal knowing. What is it that gets known where there's no tension in the knowing, including no personal conscious effort to know? What knowing simply arises on its own, not knowing things in the past or the future, but knowing experiences of the present as they occur?

Not the knowing of understanding, the knowing of a simple, simple recognition, knowing sensations, knowing pleasant and unpleasant, and knowing thinking as it occurs, knowing without being involved in thinking, and knowing sometimes any tension or pressure in the knowing, any way that knowing is not free, recognizing how knowing, being aware, is recruited to serve our desires and aversions, fears, ideas of practice and what should happen. Perhaps the simplest forms of knowing, where knowing occurs freely with whatever it is that appears, with no plans, the simplest form of knowing is just short of nothing happening at all. Just short of there being no knowing. We're knowing and sensing. Doesn't interfere with anything. Leaves all things alone.

Stay close. Stay intimate. To the simplest function of knowing and sensing. That is not something you are doing, but is instead the natural functioning of a natural capacity, a natural capacity that does not require you to do it, letting knowing be free of you. The simplest forms of knowing and sensing can occur independent of any idea of self, independent of any self-referencing. Self and self-referencing are added ideas.

The simple knowing and sensing that you don't have to do and might be closer to allowing

it. Present moment sensing and knowing is like a gentle current moving through the lake. It's like a gentle... Stay in the current of knowing and sensing that requires nothing from you except staying close to it. In the flow of present moment experience, there's also the gentle flow of liberated knowing. Knowing, knowing and sensing, observing. That's so simple. So, so basic and ongoing that it's free of you, even if you have desires that take over your awareness.

Right next to that, there's also the things that are known freely, where what is known is left alone to be itself, and awareness is left alone to be simple. Arising and passing of knowing in all its many forms. And in this large, vast lake of being that so deep the bottom is not seen, just vast darkness below. Maybe there's something in you that is like a small flat stone that can be allowed to fall through the water, down, down, until it disappears in the darkness.