

Dharmette: Mindfulness: Way of Harmony

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October 01, 2025

Keywords: mindfulness, harmony, homeostasis, embodiment, balance, psychophysical system, sama, integration, thinking mind, wholeness

So in giving this short talk, I want to first repeat something I said earlier this morning, that mindfulness practice by itself, if the purpose of mindfulness is to be mindful, might not have enough ballast, might not have enough strength, might not have enough kind of rootedness to keep us in the present moment. Because just being mindful in a disembodied kind of way or disconnected kind of way can be like a boat which is not anchored, but it just then it drifts in the currents or in the wind or the waves wherever the currents take them. And so the idea is to have some kind of rootedness, a sense of purpose or a sense of direction that we're, what we're here for, that encourages us to be mindful for sure. And it gives us a different kind of inspiration, guidance, motivation for being mindful. And the suggestion this morning was the idea of harmony, that part of what we're doing in Buddhism is coming into a holistic harmony or homeostasis or a balance in this practice. It's a very nice goal for the practice, because there's a few goals that are... If you have this as a goal, you can't strain for it, because it's obvious that straining goes in the opposite direction.

It's kind of like if you really like having an open hand, and having an open hand is really valuable, allows you to do all kinds of things and shake hands and wave nicely to people. It's really nice. So this is a really good thing to do. So you want to grasp it. And as soon as you grasp your open hand, it's no longer open. And now you have something else to offer the world rather than the open hand.

And so harmony is that way. You can't have harmony by being unharmonious, and if you're disharmonious. And so to strain for harmony, to push for it, I've got to get that harmony right now, that clearly is not supportive. The way to harmony is through being harmonious with what's here. The way towards homeostasis is to really feel what's happening in a balanced way. So it's pretty easy in life to be out of harmony, to be out of balance.

In extreme forms of it, people talk about being disconnected from themselves. And so to come into connection, come into balance is one of the beautiful things. And that's one of the purposes of mindfulness, and is to have that as a goal. How do I come into a balance? It's a very simple humanistic goal. It's a goal which doesn't require a lot of grand spiritual beliefs about what this is all about, like enlightenment or something.

But it creates a foundation of well-being, a foundation of stability that allows for mindfulness to do its work in a deeper and deeper way. So part of the value of mindfulness, of really being aware is, is that it's considered, mindfulness is considered one of the great balancers. It brings us into balance because when we see clearly what is going on, then right there there's a balance if we're unbalanced. So if you see very clearly you're hyperactive, you're just really excited, but you start seeing that in a balanced, calm way, then just that very thing begins to move the system back into balance. If you find yourself super dull and complacent in practice, but you see that with clarity, look at that. I feel complacent, complacent, lazy, uninterested in the practice right now.

But you see that clearly, just that tends to shift a little bit to a little more energy. And so in many ways, just being mindful is enough to have harmony. But if you think of it harmony as something which is not abstract, but rather it's a homeostasis of all of who we are. Then you can appreciate that mindfulness is not just a matter of cognitively recognizing what's happening in the present moment, but mindfulness is an awareness that is embodied. It's an awareness that's some kind of sense of awareness, sensibility, embodiment, some kind of sense of feeling, the fullness of our experience that radiates or comes out of the body, includes the body. So that we're not just from the neck up doing mindfulness.

We're doing whole body mindfulness. Whole body is included as part of it. Because then it's easier for the whole body to begin coming into harmony. We start feeling where there's tensions. We start feeling where there's numbness. We start feeling where we're overactivated and maybe where we're underactivated.

And start feeling that and breathing that and making room to feel it and open up just in a non-reactive way, see it and open up for it. Our psychophysical system knows the way to harmony. It knows on its own the way to homeostasis if it's given the chance. And so mindfulness, so for striving... pushing and wanting something to happen, to fix, you know, using mindfulness to fix something we think is a problem, then we're interfering with the psychophysical system's innate capacity to move into harmony and to settle, to calm down, to gather together and bring together all of who we are and some kind of balance. So to be oriented as you practice around this topic of harmony, as balance, homeostasis. There is an ancient word for that,

this S-A-M-A, *sama*.

Another related word in the ancient language is weaving together. Ekori is probably ancient word for to weave together into one. We're weaving ourselves together into this oneness of wholeness that is balanced. And now... The whole holistic sense of balance of homeostasis makes it a lot easier for us to navigate and negotiate the challenges of life. We have more room inside to hold challenges.

We have less triggers inside that we have if we're imbalanced. We have greater capacity to breathe with things and to open up to what's happening and maybe be wiser. And one of the reasons to move in this direction, to a mindfulness-supported harmony, wholeness, is that more of our intelligence is available for us to engage with our life. Humans have many forms of intelligence, many ways of processing and understanding what's going on. It's not just a story-making mind. It's not just a cognitive mind that thinks about things that understands.

We have much deeper ways of understanding that are maybe not so cognitive, that it rise out of the body. People have a gut feeling for something that might be actually quite important, gives you some information that your mind doesn't give you. You might feel an amazing feeling of the center of your chest, a very warm, friendly feeling that just wells up. When you see that the neighborhood kid has fallen on her bicycle, and she's okay, but it was kind of a little bit upsetting for her to have fallen. And you just kind of feel swamped to go over there and you have this intelligence to go and say, hi, can I help you get your back up on the bicycle or something. And that maybe you wouldn't have thought about cognitively if you step back and calculate it, what you should do with her.

But there's an instinct that comes alive. So we have all these instincts, all these forms of processing, all these ways of understanding and taking in information that works better if it's all integrated. It all can work together as one big system. When we're living a tense life, a stress life, a hurried life, a life that's preoccupied, we're actually separating ourselves from the whole so that the whole can't operate as a whole. We're operating from narrower and narrower bandwidth of our intelligence, of our processing, of our emotional capacity. And so as we begin opening up to feel in an embodied way, greater and greater harmony, balance, more and more of ourselves comes online in order to help with the processing of our life.

It's invaluable. So I offer that to you today as an orientation maybe that will help inspire a greater ongoing dedication, devotion even, to being mindful. To be mindful in your meditation, stay here. You have really valuable work to be done by staying here in this body, in this present moment, opening and feeling it all. It's much more important than drifting around

in thoughts. And it's so easy to be complacent about the drifting thinking mind.

Thinking mind is not a mistake or a problem if it has its rightful place within the whole. But if it predominates at the exclusion of the whole, then it's easy to start getting into trouble quickly. So harmony. Harmony. The way of harmony. Mindfulness is the way of harmony. So I hope that supports you. And now we have time for our