

Friday sit with instructions

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I have been doing this practice for a long time, and one of the changes over the years, a slow change, it kind of snuck up on me, was the increasing appreciation and use of a particular word, and that's the word sacred. I came to feel or sense or value deep inside, maybe in my heart, deep inside, how invaluable, how special, how inspiring it is to be aware. But not just any awareness, the awareness that has the ability to include everything. Nothing is walled off. Nothing is considered unacceptable for the purposes of awareness. An awareness that's whole in the sense that the whole universe is allowed to be known, to be felt, to be experienced.

Wisdom might say no to some things, or yes to some things. But awareness is something really special. Doesn't need to say yes or no. Doesn't need to be for or against. It includes everything. But as soon as we fixate on something, as soon as we get preoccupied on something, latch onto it or pick it up, or push it away, we're no longer in that sacred realm of awareness.

Sacred realm of simple knowing, simple feeling, sensing. And the wonderful, maybe paradox of all this is that when we do get fixated, when we do break the whole, and for people like me using the word sacred, break the sacred by latching on or dividing, that's okay. Now this gets to be known and awareness. This too is included. Look at that. I just divide it up, separate it out, close down, fixated.

And then it's almost like we're back at the sacred, back at the special. The awareness that can include everything. And whether you use the word sacred or not, it doesn't matter too much for this purpose. But this awareness that can include everything, nothing left out, might have some characteristics or some things that come along with it. But one of the things might be spaciousness. There's space for things to be what they are.

Everything that occurs is given breathing room, allowed to just be itself in its own way. Every sensation, every emotion, even every thought, if we don't pick it up or get involved. Space, you might take a few moments to feel the space beyond the edges of your body. Maybe how the edges of your body are not so distinct as it blends in with the space around you. Maybe the space within you, the space between the different sensations of your body, and maybe how the inner space and the outer space are continuous, the space within which particular sensations and experiences occur that appear and disappear.

Here in the present moment, this all-encompassing awareness, or this awareness that is available to experience whatever comes, can sometimes be associated with a certain silence, a silent knowing, a silent sensing, not accompanied by thinking, commentary. Even if in the edges of the mind there are still thoughts, beyond the edges of your thinking there is silence. And in a particular way, even in the middle of your thinking, there might be what doesn't think. The silence between the words, between the images that arise. Perhaps you're aware of the silence of space. Whatever is spacious, right there, the kind of silence.

And sometimes this awareness that is available to experience whatever arises, nothing is considered outside. This too has included whatever that awareness might be. Maybe it's associated with stillness. Something about the awareness, knowing, sensing in this spacious silent way has a quality of dynamic stillness, a living stillness. Or maybe you feel deep inside a place of stillness in the midst of all that's shifting and changing and arising and passing. Perhaps finding inside a still point, a settling point deep in your torso, from which the breathing begins, the inhales begin, where the inhale grows and expands, spreads out through your torso.

Carrying with it your awareness, your sensing with every inhale, a growing openness to the whole of who you are. With every inhale, a growing spaciousness in which there can be your body as it appears to you, a growing whole awareness that includes your emotions, your feelings, moods. They too can exist within this sacred awareness. And sometimes as the inhale grows and expands, the awareness grows to include the thinking mind, the tensions and pressure, agitation of the thinking mind. That too can be included peacefully. And then as you exhale, the exhale protects you from getting caught in the thoughts.

Rather, the exhale helps soften, relax the thinking mind as the exhale returns to the still point, the settling place deep inside the bottom of the bowl. Sometimes with the exhale, a softening of the body, relaxing. The whole body in a subtle way can carry in it a bracing, a bracing against life, including the body as you inhale, allowing the settling of the body on the exhale. And if what is prominent in the knowing and the awareness is your emotions, it's okay.

They're allowed too. Maybe on the exhale, you can release your emotions from any ways in which you grip, resist to anything related to them.

With the exhale, giving your emotions the freedom to be as they are without participating in them. Letting them be as they are. And perhaps slowly, with each breath, with each inhale and exhale, the puzzle pieces of your life gather together and gently settle down the edges of the bowl, resting in the still point that includes everything. The ability to be aware of all things without any outside is an ability that slowly grows. We learn to be calmly aware, calmly know what's happening, to calmly sense and feel what is happening. And in that calm there might be more space, spaciousness in whatever we discover is at that grasping, resisting, contracting, holding on.

It can be released into the space. It's safe to release. The space can hold it all. It's through holding on that we lose the whole. Loosening up the holding is how we can move into the whole. And as we come to the end of this sitting, there is an art in meditation of not trying, not working, but recognizing. Recognizing that we're aware, allowing ourselves to be aware here, recognizing an intimacy that allows us to feel, include everything in the bubble of awareness, the bubble of *samādhī*.

One way, one aspect of including everything in the field of awareness is to know everything as a present moment experience. So if you're thinking about the past, know it as thinking in the present. In the present you're thinking about the past. If you're thinking about the future, it's a present moment event. Know it as such. If you're fantasizing with no past and future, just fantasy, it also is a present moment event.

If the emotions have to do with things that have been long ago, it's okay. The emotions are now. Stay intimate with the present moment experience. It's sacred. It's special. And if this makes sense to you, and is staying close in, staying intimate, you might want to stay in your awareness bubble. Your *samādhī*, it's a bubble that has no edges.

When I was a kid, I had spent a lot of time in the sea, underwater, snorkeling. And there was an intimacy with the water that was close by, even as the sea, for practical purposes, was infinite in all directions. Stay close today to where you can be in the present moment. Just this here, calmly, sweetly, gently, forgivingly. And today we're starting the second round of practice discussions. And if you saw one of us on Tuesday, two days ago, no Wednesday, two days ago, we'll see you today. That's how it works. And you'll go to the same place as you were last time, but I've become Andrea. Andrea has become me. Take good care today. Thank you.