

Saturday Guided Instruction

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One of the ongoing learnings from this practice of mindfulness is to learn gradually, bit by bit, here and there the inadequacy of clinging, the stress, the suffering, of craving, of holding on, resisting. And you don't have to be ahead of yourself, meaning you don't have to believe this, and then somehow try to do it. But rather to wait until it's clear. You have the direct insight for yourself that the clinging you're doing, the holding on that you're doing is *dukkha*, is inadequate. The technical word is, it's a drag.

And one of those places to learn this, it's always available to learn this. If you need to be reminded some deep way, deep existential survival way, just try holding your breath. You'll learn very quickly that holding your breath is inadequate, that it doesn't really work to hold your breath. Soon enough, something will invite you, welcome you, ask you, beg you, let go of the holding. It's so obvious that you can't hold your breath. And so if right there in this cycle of breathing in and breathing out, there's the coming and going of that which is better left to do, the natural coming and going that it was designed to do.

Breathing in, breathing out, sometimes the breathing can be useful, the breathing breathes itself. Other times we control the breath and even if we don't want to, either way is fine for the purposes of mindfulness. Either way the lesson is there, this comes and goes. Inhales arise, they cease, exhales begin, they end. And to hold on is inadequate, unsatisfactory.

So one of the ways of practicing mindfulness is to have that in constant shifting, changing river of breathing, river of sensations. Be at the center, be the kind of a little bit prioritized that rest in it, center self in it. And then if there's strong body sensations, to have a contemplative or have a meditative way of becoming, of attending to the body's sensations. Sometimes until you see how inherent in them the sensations are coming and going, flickering. And sometimes they don't do that, but they're just things to love, to hold the open palm of

awareness, to know better, to attend to caringly. And when you've done that enough to come back to the breathing.

Other times it's emotions. Sometimes you hold them in the palm of the soft hand of awareness, and sometimes you attend carefully, maybe until you see that they too in their own way, if left alone, also come and go, also have a changing nature, especially if you don't think about them nonstop. And then when you feel like that's been attended to appropriately well enough, to return to the breathing, where the breathing maybe protects you from excessive thinking. But then if you do think excessively, then you can leave the breathing and attend to the thinking mind, maybe feel the sensations of thinking, and hold those with a soft hand, palm of your hand, a band of mindfulness. Yes. See what happens, or maybe settle back, be very quiet.

Come to a quiet place in the mind, maybe the non-thinking place, non-verbal knowing, and observe thinking. Not what you're thinking about, but the process of thinking. The coming and going of words and images, coming and going of sentences, unless you're one of those unique people who have run on sentences that have no periods ever. If that's the case, put some periods in. And just observe the thinking until you see that too, as ephemeral, insubstantial, weightless. In a certain way, ideas and thoughts and images are holograms that if you try to grab them, you don't really succeed. It's only illusion that you successfully hold on. And then when you've been mindful of thinking well enough, maybe you won't have a low standard for that. Then go back to your breathing.

So to begin the guided part of this, I'd like to evoke an image. And maybe it mostly works for me, but maybe it'll work for some of you. Sometimes, occasionally, I lay down in a bed that has a very soft down comforter. In the middle of the day, I lay down on my back on top of it, and I kind of lay down into it with a certain kind of surrender. I surrender myself to that soft bed, yield to the bed to hold me and to comfort me. There's this letting go, relaxing, softening, a kind of wonderful, wondrous surrender.

Maybe for some people this is like going into a really comforting, warm bath. And there's a yielding of the muscles, yielding of our edges of our body into the water. Usually we hold ourselves in, we hold ourselves together. But in this soft bed, warm water, we no longer have to hold ourselves together, hold everything in. We can let things, everything kind of spread open.

So as you're sitting here, feel your body. Feel your body in a global way. Maybe as you feel your body, letting your attention roam around your body, see if attention can be a caring, attending, like a gardener would it, just walk around the garden, just to attend to, noticing

the plants growing, the flowers, and moving on to the next one, and the next one, without touching the flowers, just caring attention. So roam around your body, and then as if the breathing begins deep in your body. Take some gentle, fuller breaths. So you feel the spread of sensation of breathing through your body, your torso, and relax as you exhale, and letting your breathing return to normal.

And as if breathing is attending to you from the inside, feel the breathing, sense the body breathing. So you're more living in your body than sensing than you're living in the mind that thinks and cognizes, shifting attention from the cognizing form of mindfulness to the sensing form of mindfulness. Appreciating how one way or the other there is a little bit of letting go, releasing, allowing that goes on with breathing. Even if you're controlling it, it's okay. But even so. Feel and sense that releasing, allowing.

And then, for the next two or three breaths, inhales, let your attention ride the inhale, but spread out to the edges of your body, and then return. And then continuing like that, letting your awareness spread to the edges of your body, whatever way that's easy. And on the exhale, surrender the edges of your body like you're in a soft bed in a warm water. Yield to the air around you. Surrender to the space all around your body. Taking a few moments to lightly feel, sense the space, the air just beyond your body.

And with that light awareness now, become aware of sensing your breathing. Come back to feeling your breathing with the same light touch where the comings and going of sensations of breathing gently ripple, gently flow, come and go, and you surrender to breathing. And as we continue, if there are compelling body sensations, emotions, sound. Let yourself attend to those in a light, soft way so you can learn the inadequacy of clinging to any of it, so that maybe there can be a surrender of any attachment and clinging, holding to anything that you're sensing, feeling, knowing. And when you're ready, return home deep inside. Maybe where breathing is showing you the goodness of not holding, not clinging.

This sitting period will be a little unusual in not having a bell end it. You can end it when it feels right, when ending arises for you, or if you have a kitchen job. Now, what we call the present moment now is timeless, has no time, but conventionally now is called 9.15. You know, some of you are still sitting, so I'll make these announcements as quietly as I can.

Tonight, Gillen and Adrian will be having a Q&A with us in this hall. So at 6.15 Pacific, and all are welcome. And also, I'm meeting with some of you today. We have meeting time scheduled. The link is at the bottom of the resources page. But also, there's some extra meeting slots. So if anybody who isn't scheduled today would like to schedule, there are several spots open. So you're welcome to sign up. So enjoy your day.