

Practice Notes: Entering the Lived Experience

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November 26, 2025

Keywords: sati, Pāli, Buddha, mindfulness, mental noting, bodyfulness, embodied practice, cognitive exercise, lived experience, awareness

The practice. One of the both strengths and weaknesses of mindfulness meditation is represented by the choice in English to use the word mind in the word mindful. The *Pāli*, the ancient language of the Buddha, is... And the word mind is not prioritized in the word for what we translate as mindfulness. It's the word is *sati*, S-A-T-I. And what the challenge, what this represents is that some people interpret the instructions for mindfulness, and it's partly because of how it's often taught, as being a cognitive exercise. It's an exercise of knowing.

And then sometimes there's been, there's a wonderful practice for mindfulness that supports it called mental noting. But that's a cognitive exercise. It's, you know, using the mind to kind of label or note, cognize that kind of a louder recognition in the mind than a silent knowing. But it all kind of points to the mind and to know it, to be aware, to feel, to recognize it. And so not a few people I meet who are doing mindfulness practice are doing it almost exclusively as a cognitive exercise, an exercise of the mind to know... It's an important part of it.

But historically, the teaching of the Buddha, that part is, that aspect of mindfulness, the cognitive part, is a partner with something that's much wider and broader, a much wider form of intelligence, of knowing, of sensing, that includes our whole body. And to be grounded in our body is invaluable, is really invaluable. I wish the way it translated, *sati* is bodyfulness, because of how important it is to become embodied, be grounded. To have the awareness almost radiate from the body, not be brain-centric, as if the whole body is the mind, and not just what's up in the head. And so one way to kind of make this transition from a, and maybe some of the practice that might be a little bit imbalanced and being too cognitively focused, is to enter into the lived experience that we're having in any given moment.

Rather than being aware, being mindful, just simply noting, recognizing, oh, now I'm standing, now I'm sitting, now I'm chopping vegetables, now I'm stuck in traffic. It's good to be that

kind of knowing for sure, but it might be limiting how the practice can really kind of begin to grow. It only grows kind of through an embodied experience of it, really being grounded in it, and not just having it as a mental exercise. So to enter into the lived experience, I don't know what that expression means for you, but for me it means kind of like the lived experience is always in the present moment, and the lived experience is something that's more inclusive than just a mental exercise. It's to live, it's to be embodied, to feel, to sense, to be fully in the experience.

And lived experience is also not limited, in a sense, to your immediacy of your own sensations, thoughts, feelings, emotions. The lived experience is a little bit broader than that. We're living in the middle of this wider world that's beyond our body even. We're centered in the body. We're centered here. We're cognizant here. We're awake here. We're alert. We're present. That's all what the practice is, but to be present for the lived experience.

So if what I'm saying makes some sense to you, maybe it'd be interesting for you this morning to experiment with that, to experiment with how you walk, to be in the lived experience of walking. When you come back to sit, to not have a mental exercise, but to have it more of an embodied exercise of being through your body into the lived experience of the body here and now. If that's your strength to do it that way already... Then maybe you need to, to become more holistic, you need to do the cognitive part, the recognition more fully, more clearly. And eventually those two come into balance and they work together as being, you know, one and the same, but almost, but sometimes emphasizing one side of that equation more than the other is really good. And what I see more often than not is people one way or the other are a little bit too focused on the cognitive part of mindfulness. It's often, many people it's good to do when they start practice, but the embodied part, the lived part, is as important. So hopefully that makes sense for you. Thank you.