

## Dharmette: Introduction to Mindfulness Pt 2 (2 of 5)

### Embodiment

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So hello and welcome now to this second talk on Basic Instructions for Mindfulness Part 2. And today it's mindfulness of the body, again. And one of the great delights of doing Buddhist practice for me is discovering how wonderful it is to be in the body. I didn't know this growing up, and my body was a difficult place to be in. But slowly, over time, it's like the body woke up, or the body became a wonderful reference point. And the capacity to be embodied is really supportive for Buddhist practice, supportive for a good life.

And we see many people, their attitude about themselves, their belief who they are, their attitude and belief about life is enshrined in their posture, enshrined in the gestures and movements in which they hold their body, they express themselves in. And there's not a few people who do not take time to find a balanced, upright, confident posture. And there's a way in which when we do that, that the mind responds. If the mind is shy, if the mind feels embarrassed or feels bad about itself, we feel like we're not worthy or not important, we have to diminish ourselves towards others and apologize for our existence, and we shrink the body. If we're anxious a lot and the body is expressing our fear, you know, if we're just kind of tapping our foot or wringing our hands or somehow letting the anxiety move through us, or if we have anger, then we let the body express its aggressiveness. All kinds of ways that things that the mind, the inner life, gets expressed through the body without restraining anything, but also without giving into it.

There's something about taking a balanced, upright posture that is expressing a posture of confidence, a posture of self-worth, a posture of yes, I'm allowed to be present here. I'm allowed to exist and be upright. I don't have to prove myself and I don't have to retreat and hide myself. I'm allowed to be, I'm allowed to be present fully. And so one of the interesting

practices to do in Buddhism is to choose to find and stand and sit in a posture of confidence and see how the mind responds, see how the mind resonates with that or how it supports the mind, reassures the mind and the heart. See how it's better than giving in to the anxiety, the angers, the frustrations, the lack of self-worth that might be there.

We don't have to just kind of, and so if it's hard to do this socially... Because the message we want to convey to others is so powerful. It's so sometimes subconscious. It's very hard to stand in a confident way in the presence of others. At least do it alone. At least do it in meditation.

And the value in meditation is that a confident upright posture, or a confident posture, even lying down where really all of us is here in a full, clear way. We begin waking up all the senses, many of the senses in the body. The body is an antenna that... So many of the nerve endings where we pick up sensations are there as antennas to take in information, to know whether it's hot or cold, know whether there's pain or pleasure, to know whether something is hard or soft, or to know how certain emotions, emotional impact, the impact we have from others and what's happening. A lot gets processed and expressed in the body. And so if we're embodied in a confident posture, the antenna, think of it as the antenna getting fine-tuned, like the radio in the old days, you're getting attuned to what's happening. You're there being self-available to get a clear signal, to get the full signal of what is available there.

And the more information, the more which is simply awake, aware, receptive, open to what's happening in the body. The more information gets processed by the mind, the heart, the inner life, so that it can all kind of begin informing us how to be present, how to let emotions and thoughts and feelings be processed and unfold and dissolve and move through us rather than get caught and stuck. And so the body is often what allows for movement, allows for freedom to move through the heart, the mind, and the body. Right? And so it's well worth cultivating not just mindfulness of the body, but cultivating mindfulness of posture, noticing what your body is doing at any given time. What posture is your body assuming?

And can you, without being tense, without kind of, you know, without it being, you know, a big project, assume a balanced, maybe confident posture that supports presence. That you're going to be present here. The way you stand is a posture of presence. The way you sit, a posture of presence. The way you lie down, a posture of presence. The way you walk, a walk of really being present in your body.

At first, if you're not used to this, it might feel a little bit forced, a little bit like you're spending too much time doing work to try to be in the body, present in the body. But over time it becomes second nature. And just like in the beginning, driving a car or riding a bicycle took

a lot of attention. It felt a little forced or like work. But over time, riding the bike or driving becomes kind of second nature for many people. And you don't have to give a lot of attention to it while the whole system is kind of taking it in.

So the same with mindfulness of the body. At first, it's like learning to ride a bike. Over time, it becomes second nature. And you'll be wiser. You'll be kinder. You'll be more understanding of so many different things as they're happening in the present moment, that you can't be if you're caught up in the story, caught up in conceit, caught up in self-evaluation, and just thinking a lot about, what is this for me? How am I? I'm not right. It needs to be different.

Let the body take the lead. Let the body be, in some ways, the guide, the support, your best friend. The body as your friend. Right? There's a powerful story after the Buddha died. Someone went to Ānanda, who spent decades being the Buddha's attendant, following him, supporting him, listening to all his teachings, maybe his closest student in some way.

And after the Buddha died, someone asked Ānanda, who is the teacher now that the Buddha is no longer here? And Ānanda's reply was, mindfulness of the body, that's the teacher now, that's the friend now. And that's phenomenal, that what replaces the Buddha when he's not around is ourselves. Is attention clearly rooted, centered in our body. So bring attention, not only to all the sensations of your body, but also give attention to posture and see what posture you can take that helps wake up the body, that helps enrich you with kind of all the information, sensations of the body.

Most of our emotions are housed in our body and there's a wonderful deep sensitivity to emotions, to resonance with other people that happens when we're present for all those little antennas that are in our body, antennas that pick up the sensations, the experience of the outer world, and the antennas that take up the sensations in the inner world. And to have those kind of be well-tuned, like, you know, a well-tuned radio or a well-tuned stringed instrument, so that we walk through the world... attuned, we walk through the world, deeply connected or sensing this experience. And in the middle of it all is mindfulness of the breathing. Breathing is part of the bodily experience. It isn't like there are two different things, breathing and mindfulness of the body.

This inclusive, broad feeling of being in a body includes breathing, and the rhythm of breathing can be a phenomenal support to kind of move and sense and experience the body itself. The breathing itself is part of this deep inner intelligence. So much learning, so much sensitivity, so much receptivity that's available in the body that enriches the life deeply. And finally, one of the great discoveries in this practice is how being really present in the body, really grounded and centered, in such a way that the thinking mind, the reactive mind, the evalu-

ative mind, it doesn't have the upper hand. How much we can experience a profound sense of well-being, a profound sense of aliveness, of belonging, of confidence, just simply from being alive, simply for being here. It's our reactive mind that undermines us. The embodied mind can enliven us.

So I would love to see, I'd love to have you, if you would like, to spend this day with mindfulness of posture, mindfulness of the body, and see what you can learn about yourself by tuning in regularly to what are you doing with your body, what's the posture, what are the unnecessary movements, unnecessary postures that you're involved in that either bring you stress or in some ways undermine you, in some ways diminish you. And can you assume, can you enter into, take on a posture of confidence, a posture of confident presence, that might not be how you feel, but which allows you to feel and hold how you are in a much better way than sinking into how you feel, succumbing to it. So mindfulness of posture, mindfulness of the body is really core to the insight practice that we're doing. So thank you very much. And tomorrow we'll do mindfulness of emotions.