

## Tuesday sit with instructions

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I think you all probably know there's the idea that humans can have a negativity bias, and that certainly can come into play when we do this practice. It did for me in my early years of practice, where I tended to orient myself around not only what was difficult, what seemed like was going wrong, but I seemed to also have a capacity to make up ideas about what was wrong that weren't even happening. One of them was that it was more or less an unconscious policy, at least described as a policy now, that if it was happening to me, it wasn't the real thing. In meditation, if I was meditating and something was happening, if I got a little bit of calm, well, not the real calm. If I got a little bit of concentration, it's not the real concentration. If I was being with my breath, well, this is not how the breath is supposed to be. It's not the real experience of breathing.

So, you know, that wasn't really a great atmosphere to be meditating in. But, you know, that's what I had to contend with and find my way with. And then occasionally people can have a positivity bias. And that could be also a form of delusion. And it's also possible to not have a bias, but to have a way that what is going right in practice supports us to be with what is difficult.

So there's an honesty in this practice about the tensions we carry, the contractions, the resistance, the difficult psychological states, and we can hold it. We hold the *dukkha*, the stress, with what is not suffering. We hold what's difficult with something that's not difficult. We hold what seems to be going wrong, if we do see it that way, with what is going right. So you might begin this sitting, considering for you being here quietly, what is going right? What is going well for you? Not to deny the other, but to spend a few moments with what is going right, what is going well, maybe beginning quite widely.

What's going well for you, what's good for you here on this property? The approximately three acres of IRC. What is going well for you here in this room? What is going well for you here in your body? And what is going well for you here when you're breathing?

Thank you. In the body, breathing. And if in whatever way you can, that you can leave your breathing alone while being aware of it. Maybe aware of the breathing in the more subtle sensations of breathing. Movements in the back rib cage, maybe movements even more subtle in the spine. The more subtle places where you're less likely to be involved or identified. It's easier to just leave it alone, allow it how it's going well, how it's going naturally.

And in which ways are you present for your breathing that's going well, that maybe you enjoy or appreciate? Maybe some part of the cycle of breathing is known or felt easily, lightly, enjoyably. Maybe the breathing is known spaciously. Maybe the end of the exhale is a nice thing to know, or maybe the beginning of the inhale. Is there some part of the cycle of breathing that how you know it is nice?

And there may be ways that the breathing is uncomfortable. There might be some holding or tension, resistance. Maybe part of the breathing is controlled. It's all okay in terms of breathing. Those things, those ways, would be considered the *dukkha* of breathing. And can you hold that, be aware of it, with that which is easeful, that which has no *dukkha*, equally feeling what's going well with breathing, with what maybe would be considered not going so well, has some discomfort with it?

If there are some preoccupations or agitations in the mind and the heart, they keep you at a distance from the breathing. Can you know that with an awareness which is comfortable? The uncomfortable movements of the mind, known by what is comfortable, knowing the distance it places between you and your breathing, and then finding where in the breathing, where in the body, where there is no distance, where there's a settling and intimacy with the experience of breathing. Maybe a place in the body that the breathing supports, a grounding in the body. Grounding spot, settling spot, settling spot, so that you can switch channels, switch the channel of awareness from thinking, and let the channel be breathing.

Instead of keeping thinking in focus, bringing the body's experience of breathing into focus, appreciating what is going well, and being simple with what is not going so well, simple with what is uncomfortable. And as you're aware of breathing, might you be able to trust staying close to that awareness of breathing, staying close to breathing, trusting that more than you unconsciously trust your thoughts and stories?

In the course of a meditation session, things shift and change, allowing the shifts and

changes, but remembering to recognize what's going well. That can be reassuring, settling, connecting, and staying close to that. There's a way of accompanying how things unfold through time that gently allows the building of continuity of awareness. Not out of force, but out of letting go of distractions. A quieting, a softening.

So there's the continuity of breathing in and breathing out. The continuity of steps as you walk, one step after another. The continuity of the present moment, which is always a process, always in motion. A river, maybe, and maybe returning over and over again to what's available to you that can hold everything easily, with an awareness that itself is not suffering, an awareness itself which is not clinging, grasping, to hold what's difficult with what is not difficult, to hold the *dukkha* with what is not suffering, and perhaps over time trusting more and more this simplicity of staying aware, staying present here and now.

So a few things about the retreat. For those of you for whom this is your first two-week retreat, there is a phenomenon where the longer the retreat is, sometimes the longer it takes to settle into a retreat. If you're used to one-week retreats, then you might be surprised that it takes a little bit longer in a two-week retreat to get the same level of settledness. I like to, I kind of believe that the longer it takes to settle, the longer it takes to overcome tiredness in the beginning, or maybe headaches or achiness, busy mind, that's something deeper is kind of preparing you. You're being prepared for the rest of the retreat in a different way, like being prepared to do more important practice, meet more important things, go deeper.

And for those of you who haven't been here so much, just be aware that sometimes this is kind of dry in the building here. So you have to make sure you drink a lot. Sometimes it's easy to forget to drink. Yeah. If it's too exciting to meditate, thank you very much.