

Sunday Morning Guided Meditation

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Traditionally, the first foundation of this practice, the foundation on the body, the heart of it, the center of it, is the awareness of sensations. And not sensations at a distance so much as the embodied experience of the body, the sensations of the body. Both to be able to feel and sense the specific sensations that are very clear and specific, and also the diffuse sensations, the broad flow, glow of sensations that can also coexist. The sensations that are more global through the body.

Often enough in this practice tradition, this centering ourselves on the embodied sensations helps give us a lot of connection for clear comprehension, a kind of intelligence that helps us understand what is important, what is useful, what is nourishing. It helps us understand how to be aware, how to sense in a nourishing way, in a wholesome way. Because we start feeling and sensing the places of tension in the body, pressure, stress, that is such an important indication for what is not useful, for what we don't need to keep doing, even if it's hard to let go of it or stop.

But to realize that some of the ways in which we are aware, mindful, have within them tension, pressure, contraction, and to be able to find or relax that attention to, so it's simpler. This movement towards simplification happens with how we're aware, how we know, how we sense in this embodied world of sensations. It can also show us what's opposite to tension, pressure, tightness. It can reveal what's nourishing in the body, wholesome, what's useful to participate in, to feel more fully.

Maybe how you're aware, how you sense, and how you know has a clarity or a clean feeling, that it's something to live in, to abide in, something to allow. Something to open to, something that feels like a natural functioning of awareness that you go along with, you participate

with. And there can be a kind of feedback loop of wholesomeness that supports a wholesome way of being aware, and to relax into the body, to have the awareness settle into the body.

Where maybe you can allow yourself to be nourished by some of the wholesome sensations of your body that might even be there side by side with discomfort, where there's a good kind of awareness. That opens in, opens up to feel the wholesome sensations of the body, sensations that might be occasionally associated with well-being, sensations of calm. Peace. Sensations of vitality. Where whatever vitality there is in the body supports a certain kind of quiet, peaceful vitality, clarity of awareness.

And there's the other art of taking in, allowing for the wholesome sensations, then knowingly and unknowingly support unification, integration. That are part of the confluence of all the streams of attention, intelligence, understanding that is gathering here and now. In the body, where the sensations of the body are not just sensations, they are the meeting place of body and mind. Knowing the sensations of the body, the knowing mind is coordinated, attuned, being connected to this body, and the body is being connected to the mind. The intimate way that sensing and the sensations cannot be separated; they occur together in this intimacy of body and mind.

And if what is most active in you, the most energy or attention seems to be the most pronounced, is up in the head, take time to feel that. Everything is to be felt. First and foremost, everything is to be felt and known. In that simplicity, how it's felt, and like dropping a small light object into a clear pool of water where the object floats slowly down and comes to rest. If your awareness is mostly in your head, let it be released to the pull of gravity. Let it gently float down into your body.

So there's a greater—so that awareness of your body awakens more life of your body, peaceful, quiet vitality of sensations of your body breathing. Relaxing the thinking muscle, so awareness can better spread through the body. Cough. Oh.

So much of what you need to know in practice is found in your sensations. If there are sensations of contraction and tightness, pressure, narrowing, closing down, there's some way that you're participating, involved with something—some thoughts, feeling, motion, attitude, strategy. To simply feel those sensations, not trying to fix them or solve them or make them go away. You're already introducing the solution, which is not to participate, not to be involved, just to know, just to feel.

If there are embodied, satisfying feelings that support you to feel more whole, that support more sense of being connected in an opening way, quiet way, feeling of a wholesome way,

similarly, you don't have to be involved. You don't have to do anything with them. But this simple, uninvolved knowing, feeling of those makes room, makes it possible for them to grow, fill out, unfold in some natural way. Two different sets of sensations. The same practice has a different effect. Oh. Oh.

I believe it's quite profound that the simple practice of awareness, mindfulness—that's non-reactive, doesn't try to make something happen, simply wants to be present for what's there—has two different effects depending on what it's aware of. If we are overinvolved with our life by clinging, resisting, attached, pushing things away, holding on, to know that in a non-reactive way, to know that in a not-trying-to-change-it way, but simply to know, to feel it as sensations, to know it in the simplest knowing mind, to have some clear comprehension of what's happening, the shifting, where the energy, the fuel, the nutriment of attention is, it begins a shift away from involvement, reaction. It holds it in a very different way, and it tends to lessen and quiet and relax.

And the same non-reactive, non-fixing awareness of what is wholesome, what feels satisfying, it doesn't need us to be involved. It doesn't need us to hold on or to push or make it grow. It just needs space, breathing room. It needs to be felt and known, understood in a simple, open way that gives it room to unfold and grow and maybe expand, whatever it wants to do. Sometimes that shrinks away, and partly you have to choose where attention goes at different times, but mostly go to what's calling attention to itself.

And if it's tension, something unwholesome, something not helpful, something that brings suffering, remember this principle: what's most needed is not to fix it, unless it's really easy and obvious that you should relax your shoulders, shift your posture, let go of a thought. But really, the practice is not to do any of that. That the heart is to hold everything in a generous awareness and trust the clear comprehension that somehow arises that will guide you to where that non-reactive awareness is most useful.

Being a little bit careful that the negativity bias doesn't overemphasize what is uncomfortable, and that over-eagerness or some attachment doesn't help you overemphasize what's wholesome, good. So throughout the day, stay close to the sensations. They're not just sensations. There's a powerful, significant place where the mind and body, the mind and the world meet.

Coming up here this morning, up the steps to the meditation hall, there was a whole journey of taking steps, and how my steps shifted as I walked up the steps. And by the last four or so steps coming to the top, my whole world became the texture of the carpet against my foot. And then, as I stepped off the steps into the hard floor on the second floor here, a whole other

cascade of sensations came into my foot, into my body: different texture, different temperature, different hardness. Then it was fascinating to watch not just the sensations in my foot, but how taking it all in kind of flowed through my leg to the rest of me.

That kind of intimacy with your experience. Stay close to the world of sensations. And the other thing that you might want to experiment with, maybe play with, is going about your activities at IRC at the speed of mindfulness, which can mean different things, different speeds at different times, but the speed that allows you to stay connected to yourself without drifting off in thought, without getting involved in distraction, distracted thoughts that have nothing to do with being here and now.

The speed of mindfulness is also to go at that speed that keeps you close to where knowing, sensing, clear comprehension are not things that you're doing, that you're practicing, that you're engaging in, but simply what the natural mind does on its own. There's always something to sense and to know. It's happening all the time. And some of it is happening at that level of awareness, which is nonverbal. There's nonverbal knowing happening all the time that we just take for granted, ignore.

Reaching into the silverware containers for a soup spoon and pulling out a fork, something knows that you wanted a spoon and you have the wrong utensil. And something knows to put it back and go into the other container. There's clear comprehension. There's seeing. There's knowing. That's going on there all along, even if what you're thinking about is how you can contribute to the recipes at Diore Seafoods, and you're going on and on in your mind about ingredients.

Your mind is involved with one thing, but your whole other system is actually going along with sensing and knowing and clear comprehension. In spite of you, it makes a world of difference if you're participating, if you're there for that deep mind, that deep way in which these things are happening all the time anyway, where you don't have to practice them. You go going at the speed of mindfulness so you can allow them to practice. You stay close to the world of sensations. Everything you need to know is right there. That's where the *Dharma* can support you, unfold for you the most.

Thank you all.