

Monday Morning Guided Meditation

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To understand better what observing is, it can be useful to distinguish it from seeing. There doesn't have to be a difference, but sometimes seeing can just be a single moment: we see, and we know what something is. We can see and immediately follow that with a thought, or a judgment, or a story, a commentary. Observing occurs over time. We're watching something over a period of time. It could be over a few seconds.

Maybe it takes just two seconds for a bird to fly off a tree and go through the sky and disappear behind another tree. You might say you're seeing it, but observing it is more the settling back, being maybe a little bit more receptive than seeing. It is watching or looking, seeing for a while to see the whole process of the bird flying off. So, to observe our experience is to give it time to be seen continuously for a while. In order to see and watch change occur, that's observing.

You could walk into the dining room at lunchtime and see everyone eating, and immediately see it's lunch. Then the mind goes off into stories about something. Is there enough food for me? Is my favorite place still left for me to sit in?

But if you sat in the dining room for an hour, maybe from twelve to one, first you sit down and no one is there. You sit back and watch all the changes that happen. First, one person appears, and then more and more. There are sounds and food, and people sitting down and utensils striking the plates. Maybe you even hear chewing, see chewing, and then eventually people finish and get up. Maybe by the end, there's almost no one there, and the food has been taken away. Lunch is over. You're sitting back and you watch the whole process, and you see all the changes.

To be with an inhale and just check it off—"That's an inhale. Done that. I've seen that"—is very different than lingering and observing, feeling more fully, but seeing the change. It takes

time. It takes being present. Seeing change doesn't require thinking or analysis. It doesn't require commentary. It might be pretty clear in meditation that wandering off into thought about what you're seeing is to no longer be observing. And how we observe is important.

Some of you might even go get tea and sit on the deck, or sit on the island, or someplace on a bench at IRC, in order to chill from all the meditation you've been doing, just to relax and refresh yourself. Some of that might come from just sitting back and letting your eyes gently wander, roam over the vegetation, people walking by, birds, lizards, the shadows, the leaves blowing in the breeze, the sky, and the clouds. You're not trying to do anything, accomplish anything, or focus on anything. It is a very loose, soft gaze, where the eyes are floating gently, floating randomly, and you feel refreshed. Then you come back to meditate, and it's serious.

To gaze upon your experience in meditation with the mind's eye can be done with that soft, relaxed sense of these eyes looking on the landscape. You might be observing something like the breathing, the changing nature of breathing—not just checking it off: "In breath"—but observing the continuous change that happens as you breathe in. Gaze upon it with that relaxed gaze of looking at a tree or a bird flying off. The eyes, the mind's eye, stay with the breath but kind of roam around the sensations of breathing, ride on them, flow with them, maybe gently follow.

Part of the benefit of gently observing over time is observing change. You don't have to be—it doesn't have to be any more complicated than that. It might not matter what the sensations are. It doesn't matter if they're the right sensations or the wrong sensations. It doesn't matter if you're right or you're wrong, even whatever that might be. All that matters is that you're seeing change.

Some things come and they go. Some things come and they endure, and then they go. Sometimes what you're observing isn't what changes. What changes is how you're observing. You observe from different angles as your mind wanders over something like an ache in the knee. It's the observing that shifts perspectives, sees from underneath, the sides, in the middle, from a distance.

And then the seeing shifts to something else, without any direction from you. Something arises out of the blue, somewhere in your body. Now that's seen, that's known, and that's also changing.

If you observe through a telescope while standing on a moving train, holding that telescope is going to be shaky. But if you put a telescope on the ground, on a tripod, you can gaze out

of that for a long time with a relaxed gaze. So the tripod is your body. Feel your body abiding here, settled here, allowing the body to settle itself. Maybe with every exhale, feel the weight and substantiality of the body as a form of stability. As you exhale, steady yourself in the body. As you inhale, steady yourself in the body, and as you exhale, relax the body.

And then, no longer steadying, settle into the body. Spend a few moments feeling the global body. There's a place to settle back into. Lower yourself into the body. Relax the tensions and activations in the mind. The whole mind settles itself, relaxes.

Maybe also, as you exhale, there can be a releasing of any tension in the physical eyes around them, and the muscles and tendons attached to the eyes, and around the eye sockets and the forehead. Releasing. Releasing tension in the eyes, so the physical eyes are more like floating freely. Settling back with the mind's eye, observe change in your experience. Maybe mostly with the breathing, changing sensations. Maybe in your body.

When thoughts arise, observe them as changing, impermanent phenomena that come and go, and then return to the changing features of breathing in the body. To rest in the changing nature of experience, to allow it to unfold freely, is to not cling to it. To really observe, we can free the observation of all clinging. And if there is clinging, it's possible to settle back and observe it, and how it changes, shifts, moves, is in awareness, and then not.

Oh.

And if you are observing, observing over time, is the location from which you are observing? Is there any tension there, pressure, in how you're observing? You might take some time to simply observe that tension. It's okay. But if you observe it, can you see how that changes too? And in the relaxed flow of change, allow the flow of change and the observing of it to be relaxed. Observing might gently shift to knowing, to sensing, back to observing. Everything is changing. Everything in the field of experience.

Oh. Oh. Oh.

Letting go into the change. If anything doesn't change, observe it gently. With the changing nature of observing, feeling, sensing, knowing, allow all things to be as they are. Releasing yourself into the change, into the stream. Anything that's not at rest, gently see it, observe it, allow it to be as it is, allowing the river of change to flow through it, flow by it.

Oh. Oh. Yeah.

Sometimes the change we observe moves very slowly. Soft, relaxed change in a soft, relaxed awareness.

As we observe over time, the only sense of time is in the observing, is in the changing. Change is the time. And that clock on the stage now has the numbers nine zero six. Yeah.