

## **Meditation Instructions #2**

### **Mindfulness and Insight**

*“Insights”* – we are now beginning to focus on the development of insight.

The Buddha calls the breath a divine dwelling that leads to the destruction of the defilements.

Although concentration and insight are related and interdependent, the way in which we use the breath is different for the two forms of meditation.

#### **Ardency or Effort**

The primary effort with AOB meditation is to stay with the in-breath and the out-breath as it arises and passes away.

To become absorbed in the breath and to exclude any other object from our conscious awareness. If another object arose to consciousness and distracted the attention we were paying on the breath, we ignored that object and went back to focusing the breath.

The purpose of this technique was to calm and concentrate the mind.

For the development of insight the direction of our effort changes, without letting go of the energy or diligence we have been applying.

We are still interested in staying with the breath as the primary object. However, instead of trying to exclude every other object from our conscious awareness, we want to **include** all objects that arise under the umbrella of mindfulness.

Whenever another object of consciousness arises, such as a sense experience, a sensation in the body, or a cognitive function in the mind, we want to mindfully observe that object to recognize its true characteristics.

We are applying what is referred to as **momentary concentration** – being mindfully aware of whatever arises *in each moment of experience*.

After we have been mindfully aware of an object other than the breath, we still return to the breath as our primary object of attention.

The other objects that temporarily captured our attention are **not** considered to be “distractions.” They are merely additional opportunities to realize the true nature of experience.

A question sometimes arises for meditators. “How long do I stay with the other objects that have captured my attention before returning to the breath?”

The answer is that after we have observed the salient characteristics of the object that has arisen, we *immediately* return to the breath.

In a very real sense, the moment you become aware of the new object it has already passed away. So we immediately notice the impermanence and go right back to noticing the breath.

### **Clearly Comprehending each Object**

What are the characteristics of each object that we are trying to observe? We want to directly realize the **impermanent, unsatisfactory, and selfless nature** of each experience. All three of these characteristics are interrelated, and by seeing one of them we are actually seeing all of them.

#### **Impermanence**

Comprehending impermanence means that we directly perceive the incessant rise and fall of the sensations associated with the breath and of every one of our sensory experiences.

This does not suggest that we should “think” about how impermanent things are, but that we observe the truth of impermanence firsthand.

When the fact of impermanence becomes clear, the mind stops its perpetual grasping and remains present with each new experience as it arises.

The breath is impermanent in many ways. Not only are there changes in the quality of the breath (e.g., the length, the temperature, the sensations, etc.)

from one breath to the next, but there are a multiplicity of changes within each breath.

### **Unsatisfactoriness**

There are many pleasant experiences in life. What makes them unsatisfactory is that they are impermanent and unable, therefore, to provide us with enduring happiness.

The mind that has not clearly comprehended the unsatisfactory nature of sensory experiences will keep clutching at each new object in a futile attempt to discover a permanent source of satisfaction.

This relentless and frustrating process results in recurring feelings of anxiety and loss.

Even the breath can be seen as unsatisfactory. We may want to have the breath calm down and become soft and pleasant, but it may continue to be rough and erratic. When we have a cold, sinuses, or allergies, it can be quite unpleasant to breathe.

### **Selflessness**

As we pay close attention to our moment-to-moment experience, we discover that all phenomena are in a perpetual state of change.

Everything is becoming other than it was just a moment before.

Therefore, in actuality, it is not that everything is impermanent, but that impermanence is the only “thing” that there is.

For something to exist it must endure through time. Since everything is continually changing, then no “thing” actually exists.

There is no “self” or permanent abiding essence as the basis of any experience.

Words are merely symbols that act as conceptual overlays, giving the illusion of permanence to objects and experiences that are in a constant state of flux.

Witnessing selflessness is seeing how our moment-to-moment experiences arise and pass away without the presence or necessity of a permanent self.

Our breath does not need a self to enable it to rise and fall. It has continued without interruption, whether or not we have been conscious of the breathing process, from the time of our birth.

In a very real sense we can say that the breath breathes itself.

### **Instructions**

Place your attention on the sensation created by the breath as it flows in and out of your nostrils by the tip of your nose. Do not control the length of your breath or follow your breath in or out of the body. Allow the breath to breathe itself.

Stay present with the sensation throughout the entire in-breath and throughout the entire out-breath.

In between breaths keep your attention focused on the place that the sensation is normally felt, waiting for the next breath to begin.

(At this point the instructions for insight practice begin)

Experience the impermanent nature of each breath. Become aware of the different sensations associated with each in-breath and with each out-breath. Notice the multiplicity of changes that take place even within one breath.

Remember that you are not really noticing the impermanency of the breath itself, but the **flow of changes experienced** within the sensations.

This non-cognitive and direct experience comes from being mindfully aware of the changing sensations associated with the breathing process.

When your attention leaves the sensations created by the breath and focuses on a new object of awareness such as a sense experience, a sensation within the body, or a thought, that is not a problem. When this occurs, **experience the impermanency of your new object of attention**, followed by gently but firmly coming back to breath.

## **A Review of Mindfulness**

Mindfulness is paying *bare* attention to what is occurring within us and to us during every moment of experience.

It is a kind of attention that is bare of three things: judgment, decision, and commentary.

We do not judge what is occurring in the mind. If we did, we would grasp those experiences that we judged as being positive or fortunate. We would resist those experiences that we judged as being negative or unfortunate.

This kind of judgment, and the consequent reaction to that judgment, would prevent us from seeing things as they really are.

We do not make decisions about what occurs in the mind. We do not try to analyze why we are thinking in a particular way, or try to understand why certain patterns recur in the mind, or try to manipulate our thoughts according to what we would prefer to think about.

We are also not doing psychotherapy on ourselves to resolve our psychological issues. We avoid trying to make decisions about our life circumstances.

We do not review conversations we have had in the past and we do not think about conversations we plan to have in the future.

We do not focus on the commentary that incessantly arises in the mind. These comments are always related to the past or are concerned with what may occur in the future. They are not at all related to what is truly occurring in the present moment.

If judgment, decision, or commentary does arise in the mind, we mindfully observe them without identifying with any of these experiences.

Overall, mindfulness is bending back the beam of attention to our own experience. It builds up momentum through continuous practice until it becomes a powerful force that can uncover the deepest secrets of existence.

**Additional thoughts about Mindfulness**

Mindfulness is “mirror-thought” – it reflects only what is presently happening with no biases. It is impartial and does not take sides.

Mindfulness is full acceptance of what is before the mind without attachment or resistance.

Mindfulness is always in the present moment.

Mindfulness is non-egoistic awareness – it occurs without reference to a self.

Mindfulness is the awareness of change as it occurs within our own internal experience.

Mindfulness is associated with memory and it reminds you of maintaining your attention on what is unfolding in the present moment.

Mindfulness sees things as they really are without the medium of conscious thought.