

Introduction to Meditation Class 34 Homework

Homework

a. Consider this inspiration from Alan Wallace: *Dependent Methods*

As one's quality of life becomes refined through developing increasing mental balance and samadhi, the mind becomes finely tuned, sensitive, stable and clear. As insight develops through the practice of Vipashyana, one becomes increasingly sensitive to one's own mistakes. One becomes acutely aware of the pain caused by one's subtler mental afflictions, insensitive comments, thoughtless acts, innocent gaffes.

One's standard of ethics becomes elevated and refined along the path. The enhancement and refinement of quality of one's behavior, speech, mental activity is an ongoing process. Experiences of increasing sensitivity lead to increasing purification and elevation of ethical standards.

b. Consider this excerpt from meditation scholar, teacher and writer, Stephen Batchelor:

The first step in this practice of mindful awareness is radical self-acceptance.

Such self-acceptance, however, does not operate in an ethical vacuum, where no moral assessment is made of one's emotional states. The training in mindful awareness is part of a Buddhist path with values and goals. Emotional states are evaluated according to whether they increase or decrease the potential for suffering. If an emotion, such as hatred or envy, is judged to be destructive, then it is simply recognized as such. It is neither expressed through violent thoughts, words or deeds, nor is it suppressed or denied as incompatible with a "spiritual" life. In seeing it for what it is—a transient emotional state—one mindfully observes it follow its own nature: to arise, abide for a while, and then pass away.

c. Give yourself a daily allowance of 5 minutes of relaxed "body breathing" either sitting or lying down. Body breathing is simply rotating your awareness through your body as you are aware of breathing. You can start with your feet and scan up or start with your head and scan down.

Introduction to Meditation Class 34 Homework

- d. *Once your body is relaxed and your mind is calm, take some time to think about the most important benefits you'd like to realize from practice - your heart felt aspirations. Then let go of your questioning & begin stilling your mind.*
- e. *Practice 10-15 minutes of formal sitting meditation. Be guided by the themes we used in class: Intentionally settle your body, speech and mind while focusing on the tactile sensation throughout the body. Once you've established this foundation of calm, narrow your attention to the sensations of breathing in your belly. Attend to the entire length of the in-breath, the entire length of the out-breath. Arouse your attention with the inhalation. Release thoughts with the exhalation. When your mind wanders simply notice, relax, come back to sensations in the belly and attend to the each in breath; each out breath.*
- f. *As you conclude your practice bring to mind your most meaningful aspirations & envision their actualization with the yearning: May these wishes be filled by the value of this practice, with great benefit for all.*
- g. *In post meditation, reflect on the nature of thoughts that arise. Are there recurring themes? How many are recollections or projections? Which ones seem to hook your interest and carry you away? What are the origins of these mental formations? From which causes and conditions to they originate? Are they helpful? Are they true? How do they relate to your aspirations? Your values?*
- h. *Try checking in and journaling - make this fun! Consider how your practice is benefiting you and your relationship to others.*
- i. *Suggested reading, listening & viewing*
 - i. *Read Stephen Batchelor's article in the Tricycle Wisdom Collection, "Foundations of Mindfulness" at: <http://dharmaworks.net/DharmaTouch/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Foundations-of-Mindfulness-Stephen-Batchelor.pdf>*

Introduction to Meditation Class 34 Homework

- ii. Listen to the rich inventory of talks & guided meditations presented by B. Alan Wallace. You can start with the fundamentals & learn mindfulness skills by following the thread of his teaching at: <http://podcasts.sbinstitute.com/fall2012/page/10/>*
- iii. For more guided meditations and talks you can peruse the audio library at Dharma Seed <http://www.dharmaseed.org>*