

## Introduction to Meditation Class 35 Homework

### Homework

- a. *Consider this inspiration from Alan Wallace: Mindfulness of the Breath*

*Sensations of breath are quite neutral: neither agreeable or disagreeable. When one focuses on breath & settles mind to be free of craving and aversion, a peaceful and sublime state arises out of nature of awareness itself.*

*This practice has enormous potential to improve mental health. If mindfulness of breath can really subdue unwholesome states such as hatred, malice, resentment & greed it is profoundly therapeutic. . . . Focusing on breath will allow you to achieve a sublime state of neutrality. You will not be irreversibly free; but temporarily, the mind's unwholesome tendencies will be subdued on the spot, you'll settle into state of equilibrium that gives rise to sense of bliss.*

*If you can establish this sense of equilibrium and well being you'll be equipped with platform that can be used to actively cultivate wisdom, insight, compassion & loving kindness.*

- b. *Consider this excerpt from meditation scholar, teacher and writer, Michael Stone:*

*Suzuki Roshi [acclaimed meditation teacher from Japan] says, "Beginner's mind is compassion." It means: you're ready for anything. We're constantly anticipating. Meditation instruction is just a practice of not anticipating. Not anticipating is beginner's mind, is the mind of compassion. . .*

*Depend totally on each moment. On each inhale. On each exhale. Until all the sensory experience that is inevitably disturbing begins to settle. Try and become the breath, become breathing. There is no duality, no separation. Meditation is not something you're doing, it's something you are. Breathing is intelligence. Prana is citta. [Sanskrit terms for vital energy and consciousness, respectively] Where the breath goes intelligence goes. This is so important in relation to beginner's mind. Otherwise it*

## Introduction to Meditation Class 35 Homework

*becomes something else you turn into a material task, it's something else you're doing, or trying to do. Beginner's mind is not a task, it's what you are.*

- 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.*
- 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 an alternative to focusing on the breath you can practice Mindfulness of the Body in Three Dimensions.*
- g. *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.*
- h. *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*

## Introduction to Meditation Class 35 Homework

*conditions to they originate? Are they helpful? Are they true? How do they relate to your aspirations? Your values?*

- i. *Try checking in and journaling - make this fun! Consider how your practice is benefiting you and your relationship to others.*
- j. *Suggested reading, listening & viewing*
  - i. *Read Michael Stone's talk on the Centre of Gravity Blog site: "Beginner's Mind I: Taking Care of Each Other" at: <http://www.centreofgravity.org/notes/2012/5/11/beginners-mind-1-taking-care-of-each-other.html>*
  - 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>*