

Introduction to Meditation Class 38 Homework

Homework

a. Consider this reflection from Alan Wallace: *Mindfulness of Feelings*

Shamatha (meditative quiescence - refining attention) & Vipashyana (cultivating insight) are two aspects of investigation of feelings. Shamatha entails simply being present with feelings, with no questions asked. . . . With shamatha acting as the basis for vipashyana, you will develop the ability to conduct a close examination over a prolonged period of time. . . . You will be able to hold an emotion, sustaining it with awareness so that it appears vividly suspended in the space of your mind. Then you can investigate it . . . probe it. Let it slip away, then regenerate it. How does it arise? How is it present? How does it dissolve?

b. Give yourself some practice with distinguishing between sensory experience and feeling. See if you can refrain from adding on a “story” to any feelings that may arise in response to sensation. Don’t add anything on to it. For example, impatience may arise as anxious feelings in the belly - see if you can just experience what you feel in the belly and notice whether it is pleasurable, neutral or unpleasant. Don’t interpret or try to “figure it out.” In the post meditation period, reflect on whether there may be a pattern, a repeating sequence either on or off your meditation cushion.

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.

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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. *Incorporate a period of attending to sensation and co-arising feeling. Try to refrain from embellishing your experience with story.*
- 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. *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. *Listen to meditation instructor, Gina Sharpe, teach on the practice of "Mindfulness of Feelings" at: <http://www.dharmaseed.org/teacher/75/talk/13784/>*
 - ii. *Peruse the amazing library of posts & guided meditations on cultivating loving kindness offered by meditation teacher and author, Bodhipaksa, at: <http://www.wildmind.org/metta>*
 - iii. *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/>*
 - iv. *For more guided meditations and talks you can peruse the audio library at Dharma Seed <http://www.dharmaseed.org> and or D.I.Y. Dharma <http://www.diydharma.org/about-us>*

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