

Introduction to Meditation Class 42

Sunday, April 27, 2014

1. Welcome & Check In
2. Review & Description of today's activities
 - a. *Like last week we'll jump right into a practice session (Review 6 points of posture; 10 minutes Formal Practice including the 4 foundations of mindfulness; 5 minutes Walking Meditation; 10 minutes on mindfulness & dedication). Then we'll spend some time sharing and exploring the areas we want to cover in class.*

3. Guided Practice: Settling the Mind in its Natural State II - *Attend to the space of the mind & feelings - observing pleasure, pain & indifference.*

- a. Begin by reviewing the 6 points of posture - option to lie down

- b. Formal Meditation

- i. Begin by Reviewing the Six Points of Posture

- ii. Formal Resolve

When you hear the Bell 3 X, formally resolve "I am meditating now."

- iii. Entrain with the object of your meditation

Let our practice together be: good at the beginning, good in the middle & good at the end. I invite you to bring to mind your highest aspirations for the benefits you would like to receive from the practice. How would you love to enrich & transform your life, your mind, your engagement with the world?

You can release the inquiry by dissolving all question & thought: simply resting your awareness in its own conceptual nature - sheer luminosity . . . perception . When you hear the bell formally resolve to yourself "I am meditating now."

Begin by settling the body in its natural state, imbued with the 3 qualities of relaxation, stillness, vigilance. You can round this off with 3 deep breaths.

Focus your attention on the field of the body & whatever sensations arise within it; attend without distraction or grasping . . .

Let your eyes be partially open, with your gaze scantily resting in the space in front of you. Direct your full attention to the space of the mind & its contents. You can start by deliberately generating a thought or a mental image; as that mental event fades into the space of the mind, keep your attention focused where it was

Take special note of feelings that arise in the space of the mind. At times, feelings of pleasure, pain or indifference arise along with images, memories & discursive thoughts. . . . Other times, feelings seem to arise independently of any thought or image. Attend closely & carefully to the emerging, persisting & dissolving movement of mental feelings.

Ending Bell 2X

c. Walking Meditation

Get up slowly. Make a smooth, slow transition from seated to standing. Stand in front of your cushion and wait in gassho. You will hear a series of clacks with a wooden clacker in the following sequence:

Clack! Turn to your left with your hands remaining in gassho.

Clack! Place your hands in shashu (Left hand wrapped around thumb, right hand wrapped around left hand with right thumb on top of left thumb.) and begin to walk slowly, starting with your left foot. One step, one breath. Inhale, raise your foot. Exhale, place it down. At this point you may bow and leave the line to go to the bathroom, walking at a normal pace.

Clack! (after 10 minutes): Bring your feet together and pause (hands remain in shashu). Begin walking quickly back to your seat, following the person in front of you and completing a full circle around the zendo.

Stop in front of your seat face the center of the zendo in gassho. The jiki-do will strike the bell once. Bow, sit down, and prepare for the next zazen period.

Ending Bell IX

d. Closing Meditation

Returning to settling body . . . settling speech . . . settling mind . .

Bring your awareness back to the mental domain, the mental field . . .

With body & mind relaxed from the core & breathing effortlessly, naturally, sustain mindfulness of the space of the mind & whatever arises within it. Observing this domain . . its contents . . . without distraction or diversion . . . not straying to other senses or grasping, holding on to anything.

If you have difficulty identifying the arising of a distinct mental feeling, you can deliberately generate one. Vividly recall some unhappy or troubling experience & observe very carefully the feeling that arises along with this memory.

Recall a happy memory or fantasy & observe the feeling that follows.

Bring forth a neutral thought or mental image & observe what arises. Whether feelings are deliberately generated or spontaneously arising, inspect them closely to see how they arise, how they abide & how they dissolve.

Now rest your awareness in its own nature, witnessing sheer luminosity of awareness itself . . . awareness of awareness.

Let this meditation flow in a spirit of ease, remaining present while releasing everything & relaxing more deeply with each out-breath. . .

You can release everything & rest in pure awareness . . .

To end our practice I invite you to bring your most meaningful aspirations for your own well being and for the well being of friends, family, & all fellow beings. Arouse a yearning inside that what we do here together will support others' most meaningful aspirations.

Ending Bell 3X

4. Sharing
5. Discussion - Questions, Observations

Minding Closely - the Four Applications of Mindfulness by Alan Wallace

On the Space of the Mind

The very essence of practice is to selectively attend to space of the mind while ignoring appearances to the 5 physical senses. We can attend to mental feelings without hunting them down. . . . simply the act of directing attention.

We define the space of the body as the domain of of tactile events - we study the body as it is experienced firsthand. When you feel an itch, it occurs in the tactile space. When we direct bare attention to the tactile field . . the contours might be quite nebulous. When we do experience contours, chances are that we are projecting them rather than perceiving them. The shape, volume & dimensions of the field are defined by the events arising within it. The space of the mind is analogous. Do these fields have shapes? Explore this experientially. Allow the nebulous to remain nebulous, without trying to superimpose anything on your observations.

Tactile events are distance & tangible, the space of the body easy to identify. In contrast, mental events are intangible & not in physical space. The space

of the mind doesn't need to be visualized - it's there. Anything you visualize is an overlay upon preexisting space of the mind.

Mental events such as thoughts & emotions are not observable by the 5 physical senses. . . . Mental space can be as vast as our imaginations or as cramped.

Attend to feelings & clearly observe them arising together with thoughts, memories, mental images . . . Or are your feelings often hidden, protected, or suppressed? With repeated practice, feelings can be observed with increasing detachment, clarity & discernment. An investment of time in training the attention to become extremely stable, vivid & sharp in the observation of feelings will yield a rich return.

Buddhists speak of phenomenological space - the space of experience - which precedes any other space independent of experience.

Is the space of your mind susceptible to outside influence? Might it contain events that are accessible to you & others simultaneously? Perhaps the spaces of our minds interpenetrate. To test with experience, release all grasping on to your own psych, fixated upon "I, me, and mine." Settle into the vastness of the substrate. The psyche is a tiny cell in which to be confined - the substrate is infinitely spacious.

6. Information on the Benefits
7. Meditation postures: What Works for You?
8. Basic Meditation Instruction
9. Setting Up a Home Practice
10. Staying Connected - Meditation Buddy

Homework

- a. Consider this reflection from Alan Wallace: *Settling the Mind in its Natural State*

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- b. 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.*
- c. 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.*
- d. 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.*
- e. Incorporate of period of settling the mind in its natural state. Intentionally shift the focus of your attention away from physical sensations and observe whatever is arising in your mind. As in class, when you find yourself caught up in a thought or memory, simply*

notice and relax. Return to the mental field and noticing whatever arises there, moment to moment.

- 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. *Try checking in and journaling - make this fun! Consider how your practice is benefiting you and your relationship to others.*
- h. *Suggested reading, listening & viewing*
 - i. *Read the excerpt from Sharon Salzberg's book, Real Happiness: "The Great Meditation Challenge: Mindfulness & Emotions" <http://www.tricycle.com/blog/day-14-great-meditation-challenge-mindfulness-and-emotions>*
 - ii. *Listen to any one of Dr. Christopher Germer's guided meditations at his web-site, Mindful Self-Compassion at: http://www.mindfulselfcompassion.org/meditations_downloads.php*
 - iii. *Listen or read the transcript of OnBeing radio producer Krista Tippett's interview entitled "Teilhard de Chardin On the Planetary Mind & Our Spiritual Evolution" at: http://www.onbeing.org/program/teilhard-de-chardin-on-the-planetary-mind-and-our-spiritual-evolution/transcript/6112#main_content*
 - i. *I especially recommend the uncut, unedited interview with Ursula King, biographer of Teilhard de Chardin - it's amazing!*
 - iv. *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/>*

- v. *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>*