

## Introduction to Meditation Class 46 Homework

### Homework

a. Consider this reflection from Alan Wallace:

*Real freedom can be experienced. There is no presumptive agent who stands apart from the mind, making decisions to act. . . . there are simply natural impulses of compassion, wisdom, intelligence, mindfulness, concentration a vast array of helpful, neutral & afflictive mental processes. Activating our wisdom, judgment & compassion we cultivate wholesome thoughts & release unwholesome ones. Many options appear for consideration. . . . This is real freedom.*

*Freedom is not a reward at the end of a long tunnel to nirvana or enlightenment we can develop it now. In Buddhism, freedom is seen as a dynamic process to be cultivated. Experientially, it's obvious when the mind is in the grip of a powerful emotion - psychologists call it a refractory period. A mind overwhelmed by anger or craving sees reality through a very narrow slit. With a limited perspective, poor decisions are made. At such times we're not free.*

*This practice is to maintain mental spaciousness . . . while gradually cultivating a sense of freedom. By recognizing mental afflictions as they arise, we can cultivate antidotes such as loving kindness & compassion. When we are able to act most beneficially for ourselves & others, then we are truly free.*

*Alan writes that settling the mind in its natural state is a superb opportunity to cultivate true freedom. Notice how "mental afflictions" arise and consider their power in your life. Can you use practice to create more space around these experiences - more breathing room?*

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.

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- 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 a 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. *Listen to the On Being Interview with social psychologist Ellen Langer about mindfulness and how the power of the mind can influence our psychological and physical health "The Science of Mindfulness" at: <http://www.onbeing.org/program/ellen-langer-science-of-mindfulness-and-mindfulness/6332>*

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- ii. *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>*