

Introduction to Meditation Class 51 Homework

Homework

- a. Consider author Marguerite Manteau-Rao's framing the practice of loving kindness: "Practicing loving kindness does not mean feeling love at the exclusion of any other emotions. Rather, it means calling upon loving kindness to enrobe all or the emotions inhabiting us in the present moment, many of which can be all but loving ... It took a while to get this."

a. You can work with her 4 good reasons to practice:

Feeling fear, I relax into the arms of loving kindness. May I be at peace, may I be at ease, may I be well, may I be happy, may I be free from fear ...

Feeling anger, I whisper those same words in the privacy of my mind and heart. May I have compassion for myself. May I suffuse that anger inside with love. May I free myself from it.

Feeling worry, I calm myself down, and bring myself back to the present moment, gently. May I be free of worry, may I be at peace.

Feeling grief, I soothe myself. May I be at peace, may I be at ease. May all beings be at peace.

- 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.

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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. Incorporate of period of exploring the tactile, feeling, mental and phenomenological fields of awareness as described above.

- e. *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.*
- f. *Suggested reading, listening & viewing*
 - i. *Read Marguerite Manteau-Rao's Huffington Post article, "Four Good Reasons to Practice the Art of Loving Kindness" at: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/marguerite-manteaurao/kindness-b_601103.html*
 - ii. *Watch or read the TEDTalk by Rabbi Jackie Tabick, "The Balancing Act of Compassion." Rabbi Jackie Tabick is known for being the first female rabbi in the UK and for her remarkable efforts to reach out to distinct faiths. She serves as chair to the World Congress of Faiths, working with patrons such as Rev. Desmond Tutu and the Dali Lama towards deepening religious understanding, respect and co-operation. At: http://www.ted.com/talks/jackie_tabick#t-778665*
 - iii. *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>*