

Introduction to Meditation Class 56 Homework

Homework

- a. *Feel Your Sense Gateways Practice from Anne Cushman's Moving Into Meditation. You can do this practice lying down, sitting or standing. Begin by settling the body in its natural state, imbued with the 3 qualities of relaxation, stillness, vigilance. Settle your breathing in its natural rhythm. Let your awareness settle in the field of the body. Allow the awareness to rest in the field of physical sensations for a short time. Observe this tactile field & whatever arises within it without distraction or grasping. Relax with each exhalation, releasing all thoughts. Arouse your attention during each inhalation.*

Bring your attention to the sensation inside your mouth. Sense the touch of your lips against each other, the inner walls of your cheeks, the cave of your palate. Relax the floating mass of your tongue at its root. Empty out any gripping in the jaw & lips. Rest your attention in your mouth long enough to allow the sensation to blossom from being unnoticed into lush aliveness . . .

Is there a taste in your mouth right now? Don't strain to find one - just open to what's there.

Now migrate your attention from your mouth up the inner canal of the left ear, sensing the inner ear, the eardrum & the intricate shell of the outer ear. Notice whether your eyes have turned to the left, as if trying to see your ear. Instead, relax the eyes & sense not the image or idea of your ear but the actual feeling.

Flow your attention through the interior of the head to the right ear & explore it with the same care. Then see what it's like to sense both of your ears simultaneously. Can you do it? Or does your attention flicker back & forth? Relax the inner ears to receive whatever sounds are present - loud or soft, distant or close. Don't strain to hear them or try to block them out. Include them as part of your meditation, not a distraction from it.

Introduction to Meditation Class 56 Homework

Now flow your attention into the left eye. Sense the upper lid touching the lower lid. Relax all the muscles around the eye. Feel the globe of the eyeball resting in the nest of its socket. Just as you did with the ears, pour your attention from the left to the right eye. Explore it with equal intimacy. Then feel both eyes simultaneously. Relax the backs of the eyes & the optic nerves.

As we prepare for walking meditation, remind yourself to receive whatever is present in your visual field - the images of your feet, the floor, the person in front of you, the walls & windows of the room, the play of light, color & darkness. . . . receive the dance of form & light all around you. Notice whether your mind immediately starts to make stories about what you're seeing. Instead, just open to the medley of color & shape. . . . With relaxed curiosity, travel your attention to your nose. Sense its outer bony structures. Feel your way deep inside to the bright prickling sensation of air moving through the nostrils & sinuses. Do you feel the breath more vividly in one nostril of the other? Open to whatever smells are present, whether subtle or strong.

Now widen your attention to sense all of your skin, the flexible, tactile organ that covers your whole body. In particular, feel the sensations in the palms of your hands & the soles of your feet. Feel the temperature of the air, the touch of clothes on your body. Soften the skin of your belly & notice the effect on your breath.

Much of your brain is wired to these organs of sense perception. As they brighten, can you feel your whole being become more sensitive & alert?

From here you are ready to flow into the rest of your day.

- b. *Look for spontaneous ways to incorporate brief periods of mindfulness through out your day. What senses are you using? Can you keep your awareness with sensation? See if you can only be mindful of the sensations that are arising. Notice any agitation,*

Introduction to Meditation Class 56 Homework

impatience or judgment - try to stay with those feelings and just create some space around them - free of judgment.

- c. *When doing a formal sitting meditation, 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. 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. *Listen to "A Call to Doubt & Faith," the On Being interview with poet Christian Wiman. Christian Wiman is a poet and editor of Poetry magazine. He's the author of several volumes of poetry including Every Riven Thing. At:<http://www.onbeing.org/program/a-call-to-doubt-and-faith-christian-wiman-on-remembering-god/4535>*
 - ii. *Read NPR journalist, Adam Cole's article on a study which reveals how meditation reduces pain perception, "Even Meditators Can Curb Pain with Meditation" At:<http://>*

Introduction to Meditation Class 56 Homework

www.npr.org/blogs/health/2011/04/08/135146672/even-beginners-can-curb-pain-with-meditation

- iii. Read Shinzen Young's article on "self making activity,"
"Meditation and the Self" At: <http://www.shinzen.org/Articles/artMedSelf.htm>