

## Introduction to Meditation Class 57 Homework

### Homework

a. *Questions for reflection:*

- *Am I waiting or being present?*

b. *Getting to Know Your Breath 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.*

*Now notice where in your body do you sense the movement of the breath most strongly? Sense the movement of breath . . . Now for 5 to 10 breath cycles, focus primarily on your out breath. Where do you first sense the movement of your exhalation? Is it in your nostrils? Your rib cage? Your belly? Your pelvic floor? With each new breath, you may sense your exhalation beginning in a different location. What is the lowest place in your body that you can feel your out breath begin?*

*Now turn your attention to your in breath. . . . Where do you first sense the movement of your inhalation? Where does the movement travel? Think of the breath movement as having a place from which it emanates, like the ripples from a pebble tossed into a pool. Where is the epicenter of your breath right now? Is it in the lower belly? Midbelly? Heart area? Upper chest? Do you feel the breath most strongly in the front of the body? Or in the back of the body? Does your spine move in response to the breath? How about your rib cage? Your collarbones? How about the soles of your feet?*

*Sense into the place you feel the breath the most. Feel them from the inside, as a river of ever-changing sensation, rather*

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*than simply visualizing them. Now image in that instead of the breath moving inside you, you are resting inside the embrace of a breath that is larger than you, the energy breath that expands in all directions . . . beyond the confines of your skin. How does this change the way you feel the location of the breath?*

*With relaxed curiosity, travel your attention to the spaces between the breaths - the natural pauses at the top of the inhalation & the bottom of the exhalation. . . . How wide are these gaps? Are they the same length after the out-breath & the in-breath? Are they obvious or almost invisible? Do you find yourself grabbing for the next breath before you've finished the one you're on? Are there long pauses between each one? If the pauses are long you can try counting through them . . . Om-one . . . Om-two . . . Notice what happens to the spaces between the breaths as you pay attention to them. Notice what happens to your thoughts . . .*

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

- c. *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, impatience or judgment - try to stay with those feelings and just create some space around them - free of judgment.*
- d. *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.*
- 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. Once you've established this foundation of calm, narrow your*

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*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.*

- 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. *Suggested reading, listening & viewing*
  - i. *Read Anne Cushman “Do Just Sit There: No Need to Inflict Bodily Harm to Achieve a Quiet Mind” At: <http://annecushman.com/pdf-essays/YI-In%20Practice-Do%20Sit.pdf>*
  - ii. *Read Frank Ostaseski’s “Five Precepts of Service.” Frank Ostaseski is a Buddhist teacher, international lecturer and a leading voice in contemplative end-of-life care. At: [http://facesconferences.com/wp-content/uploads/handouts/sandiego2014/Friday/1-Five-Service-Precepts\\_Ostaseski\\_English.pdf](http://facesconferences.com/wp-content/uploads/handouts/sandiego2014/Friday/1-Five-Service-Precepts_Ostaseski_English.pdf)*