

April 13-29, 2011

Dear Ones,

Here's the homework practice for this week:

Below, you'll find several options for easing yourself into meditation; including directions for the 'verbal' I am practice. However, please do spend as much time as you can working in each meditation with the **Non-Verbal I Am** practice we did tonight. Let your relationship to it ripen, which it will as you practice it. I'm also suggesting that you work with it at different times during the day, as a 'walking-around' practice. Even if you don't have time to meditate formally one day, you can still work with any of these practices at other times.

### **How Much Time to Meditate:**

Please meditate for at least 20 minutes each day. (The time of day can vary according to convenience, though most people like to meditate either first thing in the morning, last thing at night, or right after work. You might have to adjust your schedule somewhat to make this time available.)

Here's a sequence for your practice.

### **I) Posture**

Set your body in the posture, making sure that you is comfortable enough to sit for a while. Align yourself by pulling up the skin on your buttocks, rolling the skin on your thighs inward, lifting the rib cage, and letting the shoulder blades release down the back. Your hands can rest palms down on your thighs, one palm resting on the other in your lap, or in *chinmudra*, with thumb and forefinger together.

### **II) Preliminary Breath Practice**

To bring yourself into a meditative state, spend a few minutes focusing on the breath coming in and out through the nostrils, warm on the inhalation, cool on the exhalation. This is a practice that actually calms the mind and turns the awareness inward, activating the parasympathetic nervous system.

**III) Verbal I Am Concentration Practice:** As your mind becomes a bit settled, you can spend some time with the I am concentration practice as follows:

Think to yourself "I am" at a relaxed, easy pace. Begin to notice the spaciousness, the awareness/consciousness/emptiness, at the end of I am – the space into which "I am" subsides. Allow yourself to sink into that awareness. If thoughts arise, remember that the thoughts are made of the same substance as that awareness. Or name the thought as "Thought" and return to the breath, the I am, and the space at the end of I am.

### **IV) The Non-Verbal I Am Practice:**

When you're ready, begin to ask yourself, "Without using thoughts, emotions, perceptions, memory, associations, what am I?" (Or "Who am I really?") You might want to experiment with other questions such as "Without using thoughts, memory associations, perceptions, am I limited or unlimited or neither? Am I male, female or neither?") Let your attention be drawn to the spaciousness/emptiness/aware-ness that arises in the wake of the question.

As you contact that emptiness, feel yourself moving backwards, or dropping, into that emptiness as into a field or space. Let yourself rest there. After a while, see if you can allow the 'emptiness' to expand. If thoughts come up, you can either remember that the thought is made of the same substance/energy/consciousness as the emptiness itself, or ask yourself, "In what does the thought arise?"

Remember that if a verbal answer arises to any of these questions, it is a thought. Ask yourself, "In what does this thought arise?" or "Without thoughts, memories, perceptions, etcetera, what am I?" Rest in the consciousness/emptiness awareness, asking the question only when and if you start to think or to have an emotional reaction or identification.

*If the inquiry practice begins to feel too mental, come back to the breath and "I am", inhaling with I am, then resting in the space at the end of I am.*

(Those of you who have a regular meditation routine might prefer to begin your session with whatever preliminary focus practice you normally use, and then begin to work with the "Without thoughts, emotions, memories, perceptions, etcetera, what am I?" practice (**Item IV** in the list below.) However, I invite you to follow the sequence and allow it to work within you in its own way.

### **Walking-Around Practice**

You can also use this process or question at any time during the day. In fact, I'd suggest that you take at least 5 minutes at three different times during the day, or when you find yourself feeling agitated, upset, or confused, to ask the question and rest in the emptiness for as long as you can.

- **Remember:** Emptiness=consciousness=essence=presence=pure awareness=The Non-Verbal I-am Awareness.
- Don't forget to send your questions, comments and experiences to the list serve. You can also email me personally at [sally@sallykempton.com](mailto:sally@sallykempton.com) if your question or sharing feels too private for the listserve.

Finally, I'd like to acknowledge Stephen Wolinsky, from whom I learned the particular form of Self-inquiry we're using this week, ie, the question 'Without thoughts, emotions, perceptions, memory, or associations, what am I?'

Love, Sally