

Homework for Week II
Open Heart Meditation
March 23, 2011

Dear All,

Please continue meditating for 15 minutes a day, with the heart/Ham sa breath practice, plus the Thoughts are Energy practice that we did tonight.

The instructions are given below. I'm also sending the instructions for the Vertical Axis practice we did at the beginning of the class, which you're welcome to work with.

It's very beneficial, and if you have the time, it's great to do it at the beginning of meditation. Otherwise, you might want to take a few minutes to practice it at least twice during the week. This practice literally connects us to our inner core, to the earth, and to the enlivening energy of the upper centers. Its grounding qualities are especially good for those of us who tend to space out or get lost in thought or generally get out of touch with our bodies! If you take the time to get comfortable with it, you'll find that it's a very strong way to ground yourself during times when your mind is spinning, when you're experiencing a lot of emotion, or generally stressed.

Grounding the body in the Earth:

Take your posture, sitting with your hips higher than your knees, aligning the posture according to the five points.

Take five full yet gentle breaths.

Take a moment to create an intention for your meditation, perhaps, "During this time, I sit for meditation, allowing my mind to turn in to the heart, opening myself to the grace of meditation." Once you've 'thought' the intention, release it with an exhalation, as if you were releasing it into the universe.

Feel the pressure of your sit bones against the seat. Begin to sway from side to side, very gently, allowing the weight of your body to flow from one buttock to the other, co-ordinating the movements with the breath so that you inhale as you sway to one side, and exhale to the other. Sense the center point between the buttocks, right in front of the coccyx, close to the perineum (the small knob of flesh between the anus and the sexual organ) in the center of the body. This is the location of the root chakra, the ground center in the body.

Imagine a laser beam of light (you can simply sense the presence of this laser light--its not necessary to fully 'see' it). With each inhalation and exhalation, feel the light moving through the floor, down into the earth, through the bedrock, deeper and deeper into the center of the earth. With each inhalation and exhalation, send the laser beam deeper into the earth.

Anchor it to a rock.

Then draw your attention back up the laser beam into perineum, and become aware of the laser light as a vertical axis, running up through the center of the body, through the belly, the solar plexus, into the heart, the throat, the center of the head, and up through the crown to connect to the sun. Let yourself sit for a moment or two with the sense of this vertical axis, connecting you from earth to heaven.

Now, with the breath, let your attention come into the heart-center.

Hamsa Practice in the Heart

Let the breath flow in with the syllable 'ham'. Feel the syllables as a vibratory energy, resonating in the heart space. The breath 'drops' the syllable Ham into the heart, and flows out with the syllable Sa. Let the breath and the mantra syllables gently caress and soften the heart-space, gently moving your awareness to the back of the heart. If it feels comfortable, imagine that your inner heart center is the core of a sphere that surrounds the body, holding it within the energy of the sphere. You might also, if it feels comfortable, allow yourself to sense the sphere as an infinite embracing presence of which the heart is the center—the great circle with centers everywhere and circumference nowhere, the great heart. Or you can simply allow the breath to flow in and out of the heart with the mantra Ham sa, letting the resonance of the syllable ham drop into the heart with the inhalation, and let Sa flow out into the environment with the exhalation, letting your attention flow into the back heart, as we were doing last week.

Observe Thoughts as Energy, or as Particles of Consciousness

As thoughts or feelings, images or emotions come up, 'name' them as pure energy, as consciousness, as Shakti. Recognize, in short, the truth that thoughts are simply formations of energy, particles of energy that form and dissolve, form and dissolve. Don't try to push them away, and don't cling to them. Get into the habit of seeing them, recognizing them as energy.

Be aware of what effect this has on thoughts. It's important to explore and experiment with this awareness, not to let it be formulaic or routine. This way of looking at thoughts and emotions can be deeply liberating, changing your relationship to all thoughts and feelings. It simply takes a bit of practice!

Try keeping a journal or a notebook beside you as you practice this—taking a moment or two to jot down anything you want to record of the experience.

Tips: When you focus or concentrate, let your focus be soft.

When something comes up that feels problematic, like an emotion or a charged thought or mood, release it by breathing into it, first breathing it in, then gently breathing it out with the exhalation. Do this gently, with no feeling of trying to get rid of the emotion, rather with the understanding that the innate power in the breath can create space within the feelings or emotions, and allow them to release and disperse.

Have a beautiful week,
love,
Sally