

Meditation and the Three Faces of Spirit Meditation and Contemplation Homework

Week Three: January 27-Feb 3, 2011

Set aside at least 20 minutes for meditation daily. You can meditate at any time, though the early morning hours and the hours of early evening are considered optimum.

As you sit for meditation, following the posture alignment instructions:

Posture Alignment

- After seating yourself in a comfortable posture with your spine erect (if you're sitting on the floor, make sure that your knees are at least 2-3 inches higher than your hips):
- Inhale, letting the hips and thighs and sitting bones become heavy and sink into the seat.
- Exhale, allowing the inner body to lift, up through the crown. The lift is not done with your muscles, but with the power of the breath.
- Inhale, letting the chest lift and open.
- Exhale, allowing the shoulder blades to release down the back.
- Inhaling, gently imagine that the sides of your ears move back, just enough so that your head and neck feel aligned with your shoulders. Your chin should tilt just slightly downward.

Releasing Tension in the Body

Once you've found the posture, take a few moments to scan the body – the face, the neck and shoulders, the belly, the thighs, the arms and fingers. As you bring your attention to each part of the body, have the thought of softening, releasing.

This allows your body to open into a more effortless meditation,

Invoking Meditation

- Begin by offering your meditation for the sake of all beings.
- Ask for grace. You can do this in whatever way feel appropriate to you. If you are connected to a teacher or saint or deity, put your awareness in your heart, contact the feeling of that being's presence, and ask, "Please give me the grace to meditate deeply." Or simply ask the universe: "Please give me the grace to open to my deepest meditation today."

I. Core Practice: Meditation on Awareness

Begin by placing your attention in the heart, as we have done in class, breathing in and out through the heart, as if there were an opening in the chest wall. Let yourself center on the breath, sensing the breath softening and caressing the heart. As you inhale, feel that you are breathing in Spirit, light, tender energy. As you exhale, let it flow out into the universe.

After a few minutes, allow your mind to relax, letting go of any specific focus. Instead, allow yourself to be present with your experience in the moment. Be present with the sounds in the room. Sounds arise, and you are simply and effortlessly aware of them. Sensations float by in the body, and you allow yourself to be simply and effortlessly aware of them. The breath flows in and out

of your body, and you are simply aware of it. Thoughts float by in the mind, and you are effortlessly aware of them. There may be energetic sensations, emotions arising. Let yourself notice them and let them float by. Allow yourself to continue this simple, effortless noticing, allowing your awareness to be open to whatever arises. Relax your body and mind. Let this be effortless.

Now, have the recognition-- you are not your sensations, since you are aware of them. You are not your body, since you are aware of it. You aren't your thoughts, because you can know them. Instead, tune into the awareness that is present to all this, that holds all this. Be aware of the awareness that is able to hold these thought, these sensations, the awareness that knows you are thinking, feeling, being. Gradually, allow yourself to notice awareness, delicately, as you would a bird lighting on your hand.

Notice how awareness simply exists, how it knows and holds your experience. See if you can experience your awareness as the invisible, still conscious presence that is present to your experience in this moment.

Let yourself be awareness. As you become more aware of awareness, allow yourself to expand as awareness, to sense the way that your awareness, Spirit itself appearing as you, surrounds and holds all your experience. Keep bringing yourself into recognition and then BEING awareness.

If this becomes hard to hold, bring your attention back to noticing the sensations in the body, the thoughts in the mind, and the movement of the breath. Then bring your awareness back to the awareing, the noticing.

Stay with this. Relax into it. If you feel yourself efforting, relax your effort. Let your attention be soft. As you practice this, you'll find that you can settle into a wide, spacious sense of presence, an experience of just being.

And, know that at any time, you can return to the breath flowing in and out of the heart, with the sense that you are breathing in Spirit, breathing in light, breathing in tenderness with the breath. You can use the heart breath as an anchor. But keep bringing your attention to, and letting yourself be, moment by moment, awareness.

Walking Around Contemplations

- 1) You can continue with any of the walking-around practices from previous weeks, especially the practice of letting yourself be seen by the universe, practicing the presence of the divine, and having the thought “I am loved.”
- 2) However, take some time during the day to become aware of awareness. It only takes a few minutes. You begin by noticing the breath. Then becoming aware of your feet on the ground, of the clothes against your skin, of the sensations in your body, of the emotional experience of this moment, of the thoughts flowing through the mind.

Then, bring your attention to the awareing, the witnessing, knowing part of the mind. Become aware of awareness. For a few moments, station yourself AS awareness, as the knower, the watcher, the witness of your experience.

Note how centering this practice can be. Notice especially how it helps with stressful moments—just pulling back, so that you are identifying not with the stessee, not with the thinker, but with the one who knows that stress is there, the one who knows the thoughts.

Bonus Practice

*Meditation on Recognizing and Offering Worship
to a Friend, Partner, or other Significant Person
in your Life.*

- 1) Begin by sitting, focusing on the Heart-Breath.
- 2) Imagine yourself in a sacred, beautiful place. Feel the quality of the surroundings.
- 3) Feel that your friend is present there, sitting across from you.
- 4) Become aware of the awareness, the consciousness within you, and recognize awareness as your deepest You.
- 5) Recognize the same awareness within that other person.
- 6) Bow to them.
- 7) Offer flowers to this person, and feel them receiving the flowers.
- 8) Begin to speak to them, telling them what you appreciate about them, what divine qualities you see in them, what you find worthy of honor.
- 9) Finally sit with the feeling of breathing heart to heart with your friend, breathing tenderness from your heart to theirs, and inhaling tenderness from their heart to yours.